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CHRONICLES AND CHARACTERS.

CHRONICLES AND CHARACTERS.

BY

ROBERT LYTTON

(OWEN MEREDITH).

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CONTENTS.

PAGE

BOOK VI. (CONTINUED) 1

The Siege of Constantinople: Part III.

I. *How the Emperor picked up what the Devil let fall* 3

II. *And how he afterwards gave away what he no longer possessed* 7

III. *What was shown to Theocrite, the Monk* . . . 13

The Siege of Constantinople. Part IV.

I. *Justice* 14

II. *Armed* 15

III. *By Sea and Land* 16

IV. *Is Triumphant.* 19

V. *Sicut fumus* 21

VI. *Two Blind Men* 24

VII. *The Doge is Obstinate* 25

VIII. *Vertigo* 26

IX. *A dark deed* 28

X. *The fulness of time* 29

PAGE

XI. *The Horses of Lysippus* 30

XII. *And the Lion of St. Mark* 31

Notes to Part IV. *of the Siege of Constantinople* . 32

BOOK VII. ELEVENTH TO FIFTEENTH CENTURY . . 33

Farewell to the Holy Lands 35

Doge Orso's Night's Work 49

Salzburgensis Vagabundus 43

A King and a Queen 47

Fair Yoland 51

Trial by Combat 60

Rabbi Ben Ephraim's Treasure 72

Catterina Cornaro 92

Jacqueline 97

BOOK VIII. FROM 1525 TO 1789 105

The Dead Pope 107

Thomas Müntzer to Martin Luther 134

Adolphus, Duke of Guelders 151

The Duke's Laboratory 163

Vanini 208

John Peter Carafa 227

Picaroons 233

Christian, the Dol-Hartzog 234

Elisabetta Sirani 239

PAGE

RICHELIEU

I. *The Poets* 246

II. *The Three Estates* 248

III. *Wallenstein's Death* 249

The Dauphin 250

BOOK IX. HERE AND THERE 255

Atlantis 257

Misery 268

Melancholia 289

Last Words 294

A Beaten Army 307

A Poor Man, or the Matchmaker and the Bird . . . 310

A Man of Science, or the Botanist's Grave 317

A Great Man 336

Mabel May 342

EPILOGUE 348

ERRATA.

Page 3. *For* "περίχυσι" *read* "περιέχυσι."
For "ἀφηκηκε" *read*." ἀφηκηκε."
For "ἰώνυμον" *read* "ἰώνυμον."
For "ἀι" *read* "ἄι."
For "τοὐναντίον" *read* "τοὐνάντιον."
For "ἐπιπόνθισαν" *read* "ἐπιτόνθισαν."

Page 4. Line 6, *for* "obsidion" *read* "obsidian."
At the end of fourteenth line place close of parenthesis. It will *read* "Christian art)"

Page 8. Line 4, *for* "Carean" *read* "Carian."

Page 18. Line 13, *for* "mishaped," *read* "misshaped."

Page 32. Notes to Part IV. of the Siege of Constantinople.
For
"Myrtillus the one Eye-brow'd," &c.,
read
"Myrtillus the One-eyebrow'd," &c.

Page 75. Seventh line from the bottom of the page. After "Dark" a full stop.

Page 93. Last line, *for* "wreathes," *read* "wreaths." The same error is repeated on page 353, in the fifth and sixth lines from the foot.

Page 105. *For* "expedet," *read* "expedit."

Page 184. Third line from the bottom of the page, *after* "Rome" *omit* the note of interrogation.

Page 207. *For* "alia," *read* "alea."

Page 312. Sixth line from the top, *for* "As in song of the bird's heart," *read* "As in the song of the bird's heart."

BOOK VI.

(*Continued.*)

SIEGE OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

THE SIEGE OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

PART III.

"Ὧν μὲν γὰρ χεῖρας ἀπέτεμεν, ὧν δὲ δακτύλους ὡς ἀμπέλων περιέχειρε κλάδους, τινῶν δὲ πόδας ἀφῆρηκε, πολλοὶ δὲ χειρῶν καὶ ὀφθαλμῶν ὑπέστησαν στερήσιν. ἦσαν δ' οἳ καὶ ὀφθαλμὸν δεξιὸν καὶ πόδα εὐώνυμον ἐζημίωντο, καὶ ἕτεροι τοὐναντίον ἐπικόνθεισαν."—*Nicetas*, Chon. de And. Comn. lib. i. 374.

I.

HOW THE EMPEROR PICKED UP WHAT THE DEVIL LET FALL.

THEREAFTER, met for mischief and debate
Morose, within a certain intricate
Small chamber, plann'd for plotting, with slant glooms
In glooms, beyond a maze of banquet rooms,
Muzufer and his liege lord up and down
Were pacing leopard-like. Meanwhile, the town
Mutter'd outside the porphyry porches all
Like souls perturb'd in Purgatorial
Abysses paced by lamentable throngs;
As to and fro i' the streets with surly songs
Among his myrmidons the headsman strode,
Beckoning in turn from each condemn'd abode
(So to appease the Emperor's discontent
Of his own creatures for that morn's event)
Some terror-stricken wretch whose mangled limb,
—Lopp'd foot or hand,—must serve ere dark to trim

Arch, column, obelisk, and cornice, where
Already sallow-visaged slaves prepare
The midnight banquet, o'er great gardens gay
With placid statues, and the luminous play
Of perfumed waters, leaping pure upon
Lipp'd lavers large of black obsidion
Or alabaster fill'd with filmy light.
For 'mid his Court the Emperor sups to-night.
And in that chamber dim where these debate,
O'er the low bronzen door elaborate,
Some old Greek sculptor (dead an age ago
Ere Pisa yet brought forth her wondrous Two,
For Florence' sake, and all the world's, to impart
New sweetness to his barbarous Christian art
Had wrought in monstrous imagery, bold,
Uncouth, and drear despite of paint and gold,
Christ tempted of the Devil upon the Mount :
Varying the tale the Evangelists recount
After the manner of the artist's mind.
Colossal forms ! the Saviour of mankind,
And Tempter,—not alluring he, but grim
As the grim Middle Age imagined him ;
Satan ; that ancient hodman of the souls
That God forgets ; in corners, dens, and holes
Where'er Sin squats, taking what he can find,
He rakes earth's offal for that hod behind
His hateful back ; God's scavenger is he ;
Who here, with obscene gesture coarse and free,

Hell's twy-prong in his claw-bunch-fingers clutch'd,
Picks from the rubbish at his shoulder hutch'd,
And proffers to the Son of Man, a crown.

Now, while these two were pacing up and down
In moody talk, and Muzufer began
To praise and pity much that day's marr'd plan,
As being shrewdly plotted,—righteous, too,
If rightly look'd at . . . . "For, Sir Emperor, who
Disputes the right of Christian Emperors
To slay the infidel ambassadors
Of Moslem monarchs, that by nature stand
Outside the law of every Christian land?
Yet Christians that, unchristianly, oppose
Your Christian Majesty, are, certes, foes
More formidable, therefore worse by far,
Than merely Ottoman and Moslem are.
Meanwhile, they have escaped us. We have fail'd.
Which is a pity. Fifty slaves impaled
Will poorly, poorly at the best, replace
Those eight Frank heads which we had hoped should grace
This evening's banquet. For altho' we preach
Thereby a wholesome homily to each
Incipient traitor, and altho', indeed,
These cravens merit death, methinks you feed
On your own limbs thus—prey on your own power,
Devour'd the more, the more that you devour."

—He speaking thus, against the bronzen door
Alexius struck his fist fierce-clench'd, and swore
An angry oath that neither Heaven nor Hell
Should mar that evening's merriment.

Then there fell
With clink and clatter, by that blow shaked down,
Out of the Devil's claw the Devil's crown
Striking the Emperor's foot.

The two stood still,
And stared upon each other.

"Omen ill!"
Mused Muzufer. "Hell's Monarch's clutch is not
So sure but it lets go what it hath got."
Alexius, laughing, answer'd quick "Not so.
Nor is it the first time I have stoop'd as low
To get,—nor, gotten, thank'd the Devil for
This glittering hoop." And "Ay, Sir Emperor!"
With mimic mirth laugh'd Muzufer. Within
His dusky niche a sympathetic grin
The wrinkled visage of the Father Fiend
Emitted, till his coarse brows seem'd thick-vein'd,
And dull eye seem'd to wink with dismal glee.
So all together laugh'd that Wicked Three,
While Day, to reach the West's red innermost
With lurid foot the lucid pavement crost.

Then at the casement Muzufer cried "Hark!
The butchery has begun before 'tis dark.
One . . two . . three . . four . . five wretches? how they twist
On those spiked staves! Sure, that's a woman's wrist
And hand there, with the fluttering fingers? Phew!
We must not sup to windward of this stew,
Or you will find the hippocrass smell strong.
Burn, burn benzoin! How heavily hums along
Yon beetle, caring nothing for it all,
—Fool, and it sets me talking!"

"The shades fall
Fast," cried Alexius. "Come! the Banquet waits."

II.

AND HOW HE AFTERWARDS GAVE AWAY WHAT HE NO LONGER POSSESSED.

And while he spake, Byzantium's golden gates
From silver clarions to the setting sun
Breathed farewells musical; and, Day being done,
Night enter'd swift to meet the Sons of Night.

Not black however, but in blaze of light
Luxurious.
Gardens. Galleries. Walls o'erlaid
With marvellous, many-colour'd marbles, made

By multitudes of fragrant flames, that pant
From flashing silver lampads, fulgurant:
Cornelian, agate, jasper, Istrian stone
And Carean mix'd, to shame the glories gone
From Roman streets since first Mamurra had
His own housewalls with milkwhite marble clad.
And down deep lengths of glowing colonades
The dim lamps twinkle soft thro' slumbrous shades
Around rich-foliaged frieze, and capitals
Of columns opening into halls and halls
Warm with sweet air, and wondrous colour roll'd
From rare mosaics—azure dasht with gold;
'Neath domes of purple populous with star
On star of silver, coved o'er circular
Vermiculated pavements interlaid
With wreaths of flowers and intricatest braid
Of delicate device, about the base
Of granite basins broad, which all the race
Of sea-gods and sea-horses linger round,
In love for ever with the long cool sound
Of lucent waters that low-laughing fall
And fall from pedestal to pedestal
Among those curling nymphs and tritons bold
That bridle restive dolphins rein'd with gold.
Beyond, 'twixt pillar'd range and statued plinth,
The lustrous maze of marble labyrinth
Unfolds; and, disentangling from itself
Its luminous spaces, spreads into a shelf

Of shining floorage carpeted with deep
Thick-tufted crimsons, soft as summer sleep
Under the footsteps of delicious dreams.
O'er which, thro' dark arcades, steal airy gleams
And sumptuous odours, and melifluous waves
Of music that with swimming languor laves
Dim gardens green and deep, and flowery plots
Where minstrels strike their golden angelots,
And sing—now, Cæsar's splendour, Cæsar's state,
That doth Olympian glories emulate,
—And now, lascivious songs, the wanton loves
Of Mars and Venus,—till the lemon groves
Are loud with lyric rapture.

Piled and built
On glowing tables, garlanded and gilt,
Of Mauritanian tree, the Banquet shines,
—Bright-beaming vessels brimm'd with costly wines,
And savorous fruits on golden salvers heap'd,
And smoking meats in misty spices steep'd—
All round the terraced porch. In plenitude
Of power, here, midmost of his multitude
Of Greek Patricians robed in purple pomp
Alexius sits. Meanwhile the bronzen tromp,
Blown from dim-gaping galleries far behind,
Strives, with the clang of sudden cymbals join'd,
To crush all feebler sound out of each dull
Low wail, or intense shriek, that in the lull

Of that loud music ever and anon
Some wind, from outer darkness pour'd upon
The palace thresholds, pulsing passionate,
Contrives to filter thro' the golden grate.

Along a brilliant frieze of burnish'd wall
That beams behind the throne Imperial,
In rangèd groups emboss'd and painted, blaze
Byzantine sculptures that perpetuate praise
Of Trajan's Justice, and the Sages Seven
Of Antique Greece: between whose tablets driven
Great cedarn beams, that prop the deep pavilion,
Drop cataracts down of silken streams vermilion.
Beneath, in bronze, Alcides with his club,
And that she-wolf that had for sucking cub
Rome's founder. But before the Emperor gleam
High argent censers, whence thick odours stream
From left to right in vast voluptuous clouds
Of incense that with floating mist enshrouds
His glory like a God's. And by his side
At his left hand, dark-hair'd delicious-eyed
Egyptian Jesraël leans. Around her twine
The curling odours, and the fragrant wine
Is lucent on her humid lip: and he,
Beneath the loaded board, with amorous knee
Frets her lascivious tunic's light-spun folds,
And in hot palm her languid finger holds.
Anon, with heated eyes, turning from her

(All glitter and all glare) to Muzufer
(All gravity, all gloom) that sits meanwhile
On his lord's right,—forgetting even to smile
So much his mind is busy at the task
Of plotting how to slip from life's main masque
Silently, unperceived, by some side-way
Into safe darkness, ere God's Judgment lay
Pride's revel all in ruins . . . for he read
Strange writing on the walls,—Alexius said
"What wise and weighty matter is astir
Behind those knitted brows?"

Then Muzufer,
Like one surprised without his armour on,
Caught up his smile in haste, and answer'd "None,
Great Master, weigh more anxiously than I
The mighty interests of Your Majesty;
Whose greatness needs must oft oppress the brain
Compell'd its utmost faculty to strain
In contemplating the august extent
Of power that doth, as doth heaven's firmament,
Invest the world with glory. Who oppose
Your Majesty, oppose mankind, which owes
From realms unnumber'd homage to your rule.
Who doubts this is a miscreant and a fool:
Whoe'er Your Majesty's most sacred, high,
And solemn rights dare question or deny
Is a vile traitor and an arrant knave:

But they that now in arms presume to brave
Your power supreme are sinners more accurst
Than any, save (if such there be) that worst
Of wicked men that, being Grecian born,
This barbarous rabble doth not loathe and scorn
More than Turk, Jew, or Saracenic scum
Of nameless nations scorn'd by Christendom.
If such there be, were he my father's son,
Myself would hold, to hang that caitiff on,
No gibbet high enough. My thoughts are these."

"Paul's body!" quoth Alexius, "well they please
Our passing humour. Wherefore we assign
Hereby, from this time forth to thee and thine
In title principal, and lordship free,
Our palace of Chalcedon by the Sea."

And while he spake thus, echoed by the shout
"Long live Alexius!" from the gates without
Hoarse hubbub stream'd, and up the revelling hall,
Bearing the banner'd bird imperial,
A legionary captain, pale with fear,
Made way towards the throne.

To whom "What cheer?"
With husky wine-quench'd voice the Emperor cried,
And to the Emperor, rueful, he replied
"Ill cheer, Sir Emperor! The Latin Host

Hath fall'n upon Chalcedon. We have lost
Many brave men, and one fair palace you."
"Pish!" cried the Emperor. "The Franks are few.
What's lost to-night may be to-morrow won,
Palaces be there many a fairer one
For us to feast in, you to fight for, still.
Begone!"

III.

WHAT WAS SHOWN TO THEOCRITE, THE MONK.

So feasted they. No bird of ill
With boding note around the rooftree croak'd,
Nor bearded star the mason'd turrets stroked,
Nor howl'd the hoarse wolf near the revelling town.
Only, that night a marvellous thing was shown
To Theocrite the Monk, when he in prayer,
After long fast went forth to breathe the air
What time the air was stillest. For to him
Appear'd in heaven, above the city dim,
The helmeted Arch-Angel of high God,
That in his right hand held a measuring rod,
Stretch'd over all the East. To whom God gave
Command to measure out a mighty grave
Wherein to bury and hide from human eye
The body of a world about to die.
This thing in vision at the mid of night,
'Twixt heaven and earth, was shown to Theocrite.

END OF PART III.

PART IV.

"Ω πόλις πόλις, πόλεων πασῶν ὀφθαλμέ, ἄκουσμα παγκόσμιον, θέαμα ὑπερκόσμιον, ἐκκλησιῶν γαλουχέ, πίστεως ἀρχηγέ, ὀρθοδοξίας ποδηγέ, λόγων μέλημα, καλοῦ παντὸς ἐνδιαίτημα! ὦ ἡ ἐκ χειρὸς κυρίου τὸ τοῦ θυμοῦ πιοῦσα πατήριον, ὦ ἡ γενομένη πυρὸς μερὶς πολλῷ δραστικωτέρου τοῦ καταβασίου καλαι πυρὸς πενταπόλεως, τι μαρτυρήσω σοι;"—*Nicetas.* Alexius Ducas, p. 763. c. 5.

I.

JUSTICE

"*Te lucis ante terminum*" . . . . and lo,
One half of heaven is wrapt in rosy glow!
"*Rerum creator poscimus*" . . . . the hymn
Sweet-heaving swells o'er solemn air and dim.
Sunset. A few large stars. The sea-wind vents
Among the narrow-streeted silken tents,
From Chalcedonian palace chambers calm,
The lofty, pure, sonorous Latin psalm
Forth-pour'd by sworded priests athwart the tramp
And hoarse buzz humming deep from camp to camp
Of those six battles, ranged and banner'd all
Under the Counts of Flanders, of St. Paul,
Of Montmorency, of Blois, and Montferrat
Who, with his Lombards, holds the rear, stretch'd flat
Behind the city, lengthening many a mile
Into the midnight toward St. Stephen's pile.—

And all athwart this rustling region far
Buzz'd over by the sounding wings of War
(That frets and flutters, bound in brazen chain,
And breasts his iron cage) from brain to brain
One passionate purpose seethes.

For now those eight
Ambassadors, return'd, with wrath relate
In clamorous conclave their scorn'd embassage:
Whose high compeers consult how best to wage
Now-imminent conflict with self-confident Crime,
And wield the weighty instrument of Time,
Ready to smite.

So, after lowly prayer,
Each Knight upon his naked sword doth swear
A solemn oath to see dread justice done,
And rouse the slumbering war at rise of sun.
Therefore, all night, the humming tents about,
By twos and threes conversing, in and out
'Twixt mighty mangonel, and wheelèd tower
Arm'd with spring-shoulder'd arbalists of power,
The great chiefs stride indignant.

II.

ARMED

At sunrise
The six-times-folded Battle, serpent-wise,

Slid past Blachernæ, and with steely fold
At sunset wrapt grey Boemond's castle hold.
There, by long labouring in the dark, was made
All round the camps deep trench and palisade;
'Gainst which the war for many a night and day
Flared, rock'd, and roar'd.

Full hard it were to say
What multitudes of mighty deeds were done,
Since first Lascaris by the Bourgignon
Was captived, till the Danish curtle axe
Dropp'd on the walls, before those fierce attacks
Which, all unarm'd, Eustache Le Marchis led,
Only an iron cap upon his head.

III.

BY SEA AND LAND,[29]

Meanwhile, at sea, the white Fleet, following,
Hover'd hard by; and crept with cautious wing
Under the wave-girt city; planting there
A formidable grove.

Not anywhere
Thro' seas and skies were ever sail'd or row'd
Ships huge as these. The Paradiso proud,
Like a broad mountain, monarch of the morn,
By the mad clutch of tumbling Titans torn
Down from the windy ruins of the sky,
With Jove's chained thunders throbbing silently

In his strong pines, adown the displaced deep
Shoulders the Pelegrino,—half asleep,
With wavy fins each side a scarlet breast
Slanted. Hard by, more huge than all the rest,
—Air's highest, water's deepest, denizen,
A citadel of ocean, throng'd with men
That tramp in silk and steel round battlements
Of windy wooden streets, mid terraced tents
And turrets, under shoals of sails unfurl'd,
—That vaunting monster, Venice calls "The World."

And now is pass'd each purple promontory
Of Sestos and Abydos, famed in story,
And now all round the deep blue bay uprise
Into the deep blue air, o'er galleries
Of marble, marble galleries; and lids
O'er lids of shining streets; dusk pyramids
O'er pyramids; and temple walls o'er walls
Of glowing gardens, whence white sunlight falls
From sleepy palm to palm; and palace tops
O'ertopp'd by palaces. Nought ever stops
The struggling Glory, from the time he leaves
His myrtle-muffled base, and higher heaves
His mountain march from golden-grated bower
To bronzen-gated wall,—and on, from tower
To tower,—until at last deliciously
All melts in azure summer and sweet sky.

Then, after anthem sung, sonorous all
The bronzen trumpets to the trumpets call;
Sounding across the sea from bark to bark,
Where floats the wingèd Lion of St. Mark,
The mighty signal for assault.
A shout
Shakes heaven. And swift from underneath upspout
Thick showers of hissing arrows that down-rain
Their rattling drops upon the walls, and stain
The blood-streak'd bay. The floating forest groans,
And creaks, and reels, and cracks. The rampart-stones
Clatter and shriek beneath the driven darts.
And on the shores, and at the gates, upstarts,
One after one, each mishaped monster fell
Of creaking ram, and cumbrous mangonel,
Great stones, down-jumping, chop, and split, and crush
The rocking towers; wherefrom the spearmen rush.
The morning star of battle, marshalling all
That movement massive and majestical,
Gay through the tumult which it guides doth go
The grand grey head of gallant Dandalo.
With what a full heart following that fine head,
—Thine, noble Venice by thy noblest led!
In his blithe-dancing turret o'er the sea,
Glad as the grey sea-eagle, hovers he
Thro' sails in flocks and masts in avenues.

Elsewhere, the inland battle, broken, strews

With flying horse the hollows ; while but ill
The heavy-harness'd Frankish Knighthood still
Strains, staggering as each Flanders stallion falls,
In the rear region, round the city walls,
Against those silken turms and squadrons light,
That follow and fly, scatter and reunite,
Tormenting their full-bulk'd too-cumbrous foe ;
Like swarms of golden bees that come and go
About the bear whose paw is on their hive
Patient and pertinacious, tho' they drive
Their stings into his eyes, settle and swarm,
Disperse and close again, to do him harm,
Unharm'd. For there in splendour eminent
Is pitch'd the purple-topt Imperial tent,
And domes of crimson glow i' the azure sky,
Girt by Byzantium's gorgeous chivalry.

So to the kindling of the Even Star
The groaning-hearted battle greatens.

IV.

IS TRIUMPHANT.

Far
And near the strong siege tugs by sea and land
The storm-struck city,—hugg'd on either hand
By heavy ruin—till from mast to wall,
From sea to shore, the high drawbridges fall,
And in mid-air the arm'd men march, and drop

On battlemented roof and turret top.
The deadly Greek fire dips, and drips, and crawls,
And twists, and runs about the ruining walls,
And all is blaze and blackness, glare and gloom.
Pietro Alberti, the Venetian, whom
His sword lights, shining naked 'twixt his teeth
Sharp-gripp'd, thro' rushing arrows, wrapt with death,
Leaps from his ship into the waves: now stands
On the soak'd shore: now climbs with bleeding hands
And knees the wall: now left, now right, swift, bright,
Wild weapons round him whirl and sing: now right,
Now left, he smites, fights, shakes, breaks, all things
down.

The Standard of St. Mark is on the town!

André d' Herboise, the gallant gay French knight,
Fast following him, hath gain'd the other height.
Prompt as a plunging meteor, that strikes straight
And instantaneous thro' the intricate
Thick-crowded stars its keen aim, flitting thro'
The choked breach, flashes dauntless Dandalo.
In rush the rest. In clattering cataract
The invading host rolls down. Disrupt, distract,
The invaded break and fly. The great church bells
Toll madly, and the battering mangonels
Bellow. The priests in long procession plant
The cross before them, passing suppliant

To meet the marching conquest. With fierce cries
Against the throne the rabble people rise,
And slaves cast off their fetters, and set free
Their hidden hates. For aye the craven knee
That meekest crooks, adoring present power,
Before the little idol of the hour,
Is cousin to the craven hand that smites
Most fiercely down the image it delights
To insult and shame when greater gods wax wroth.

V.

SICUT FUMUS.

Now, therefore, when Alexius saw that both
The creatures and destroyers of his power
Were on him, to his soul he said—"The Hour
Is mine no more. Soul, we have lived our day."
Then, waiting for the night, he fled away
Into the night. Night took him by the hand
And led him silently into the land
Of darkness. Darkness o'er his forehead cast
Her mighty mantle, murmuring "Mine, at last!"

In the great audience chamber at Byzance
A Latin soldier, leaning on his lance
Fatigued with slaughter, on the marble ground
Blood-bathed an empty purple garment found.
And then, for the first time, immersed in thought,

The Latin soldier mutter'd "I have fought
Against an Emperor!"
Jewels in her head
And serpents in her hand,—smiling, and dead,
And beautiful in death,—each glorious globe
(Loosed from the glittering murrey satin robe)
Of her upturn'd defiant bosom, bare
Save for the few locks of delicious hair
That swept them—saved by scornful death from scorn—
Only the beauty left of her—at morn
They found the Egyptian Jezraäl.

So fades
Star after star along the cypress glades,
Face after face from the rose-bowers: so song
After song dies the lonesome lawns along.
Each to his time! The revel and the rout
Lamp after lamp, mask after mask, go out;
Still for new singers the old songs to sing
In the same place to the same lute-playing:
Still for new dancers, to new tunes the same
Dance dancing ever, to take up the game
All lose in turn.
Another time begins.
New passions, and new pleasures, and new sins,
For ever the old failure in new forms;
To fashion a metropolis for worms
And write in dust man's moral!

Meanwhile, where
Hides Muzufer? what doth he? how doth fare?
How fares the small sunshiny insect thing
That feeds on death and in the beam doth sing,
When quench'd the beam, and stopp'd the moment's play?
Nature both brings to birth and sweeps away
Myriads of minims such: whose souls minute
For loss or gain doth Heaven or Hell compute?
Please they, or tease they, how shall Fate devise
Fit retribution for dead butterflies?

Then, Power being changed, the changeful people went,
And from the noisome pit where he was pent
Drew forth blind Isaac.
Seven black years of night
Clung to him, and kept him cold in the sun's light,
For he had grown to hold familiar talk
With newts and creeping things,—long wont to walk
About him in the silent dark down there,
Which he would miss henceforth. He was aware
Of little else. And it was hard to him
To understand (so very faint and dim
To his dull memory were the former times)
Why the great world, intent upon its crimes
And pleasures, was at pains to take him back
Unto itself, from that oblivion black,
Where he, the loveless man of long ago,

Had learn'd to love, what men abhor—the slow
Soft-footed dwellers of the dark. He had
So lost the habitude of being glad,
And all the strength of it, that, tho' thrice o'er
New friends explain'd to him his joy, no more
Than one born deaf and dumb he seem'd to find
A meaning to the matter in his mind.
So, passively, he yielded to the crowd
That robed him, crown'd him, and proclaim'd aloud
Him only the true Cæsar.

VI.

TWO BLIND MEN.

Now once more
Proud to up-prop all Power, those lions four,
Subservient, their broad blazing backs upon
The bright floor crouch, beneath the throne whereon
Blind Isaac sits; with fumbling hand, in dull
Delaying doubt, to affix the golden bull
And great sign manual, by the Barons claim'd,
To that high treaty with Alexius framed
In Zara.
Which to place in those weak hands,
Blind Dandalo before blind Isaac stands.
Two grey old men, and sightless each. The one
Sits robed in royal state on sumptuous throne,
Distinguisht by the imperial diadem
And purple mantle proud with many a gem;

And sees them not: but, in himself, doth gaze
On darkness, gloomy death, and guilty days.
The other, by long noble labours marr'd,
With august brows by battle thunder scarr'd,
Stands,—mark'd to sight by honourable soils
Of his yet recent self-regardless toils;
And sees them not: but, in himself, doth see
The bright beginnings of great days to be,
And glory never dying.

VII.

THE DOGE IS OBSTINATE.

After this,
In the Cathedral (as old custom is)
On battle shield, in purple buskins, borne,
And vermeil robe, by new-made Cæsars worn,
The young Alexius, in full pomp and state
Of sovran power, supreme beneath the great
Imperial ensign's eagle wings unfurl'd,
Receives high homage of one half a world.

Which things accomplisht; and a month or more
Of pageant and carousal being o'er
(Whose swiftly-sliding and soft-footed hours
Slipp'd unsuspected by, mid myrtle bowers,
From porphyry palaces) the Red Cross lords,
Yawning, with listless looks down their long swords,

As banquet after banquet pall'd on them,
Cry . . . "Now for Joppa and Jerusalem!"

The new-made Emperor still their presence prays
And added aid, with promised guerdon: says
Need yet remains to heal by wholesome arts
The much-hurt empire,—all the popular parts
Bind up in single, and compact the state;
Which tasks more time: hints vaguely hindrance great;
Claims to appease, and scruples nice to weigh;
Funds hard to find; grave causes for delay;
With promise fair of further profit still,
Thereby implied.
"The Treaty, sign'd, fulfil
First, Emperor of the East," said Dandalo.

VIII.

VERTIGO.

Alas, that in this world 'tis ever so!
For men might be as gods, if it were not
That greed of power goes mad from power got.
Who stands upon the pinnacle, as 'twere,
Of Greatness,—seeing, hearing, everywhere
About himself the dazzling orb spin round,
Turns dizzy at the sight and at the sound,
And tumbles from the top to the abyss.
Of all high places this the danger is:—
—That those who stand there needs must gaze beneath,

Till they wax desperate ; being wooed to death
By depth ; from whose black clutch some point of sight
Above them seen, if such there were,—some height
Higher than theirs,—whereon to fix their eyes,
Might haply save them. But this Heaven denies.
And, seeing that, of Emperors and Kings,
The Scribe of Judgment (who plucks out his wings
To write their histories o'er and o'er again,
Leaving meanwhile the lives of meaner men
To kind oblivion) doth record to us
So many monsters, so few virtuous,
What wonder if some weary souls suppose
That 'tis perchance *the thing itself* (who knows ?)
Time cannot cure : the nature of the *thing*,
Not of the *man :* the *kingship*, not the *king ?*

Howe'er that be, Alexius, now made strong
By rights restored, forthwith wax'd weak by wrong
Renew'd : and palter'd both with his allies
And with his people ; teasing each with lies,
And fronting bothways with a double face.
Thus, since, with reason shrewd, the populace
Look'd coldly, and askance, on power restored
By foreign arms, the frighten'd Prince ignored
Those foreign friends to whom he owed his throne :
Carp'd at their claims, and did his oath disown.
For heedless Hope in misery oft is fain
To mortgage more of gratitude for gain

Than, in possession, frugal Memory yields
Her clamorous claimant, from full harvest fields.
But since, withal, he fear'd the people too,
He plotted still, and still desired (untrue
To all alike) by foreign arms kept still
Still, too, to keep in check the people's will.
Till foes, thus finding friends in friends turn'd foes,
Said, "Power is powerless."

IX.

A DARK DEED.

Then one night uprose
Myrtillus, the one-eyebrow'd, in the dark [30]
(Mark'd out for mischief by the devil's mark
Across his squinting double-minded eyes)
And seized on the Boy-Emperor by surprise
And treason foul, in unsuspecting sleep;
Whom, having plunged him down a dungeon deep,
Six times with hell-brew'd hebanon he tried
To poison. But the Prince, because he died
That way too slowly, being young and hard
Of life, 'tis said, was strangled afterward.
No need to strangle Isaac. Soon as told
Of what was done, he did his mantle fold
Across his brows, and said, "This was to be
Because of my great sins that follow me."
And that same night he died.

The morrow morn,
On battle shield, in purple buskins, borne,
Myrtillus men crown'd Emperor.

X.

THE FULNESS OF TIME.

Dandalo
Said then . . . . "The time is come, which long ago
I saw in Zara. Who eschew the good
Must choose the evil. Drunk with brawl and blood,
This Empire reels upon her downward road;
Corrupt at home, contemptible abroad.
Devilish, she would be godlike without God:
Godless, would rule, who needs, herself, the rod:
And deems, not being good, she can be great:
—Great, without one great man, i' the face of Fate!
The singular tyrant breeds the general slave,
And shameless citizens shamed cities have.
The time is now, and ours the hands, O friends,
To sweep this rubbish hence, and make amends
To earth, too long encumber'd with the same.
—To arms, for all men's sake, and in God's name!"

So, down before the iron Occident
The guilty golden-crownèd Orient went.

Because those Powers that make, and break, and keep,
And cast away—Spirits that in the deep

And toilful stithy of that underground
Grey miner, Nature, with unheeded sound
Monotonously hammer, heave, and beat,
And bend with blow on blow, and heat on heat,
The pliant world to every shape it wears,
Upon the stubborn anvils of the years—
—Said to each other "Break we up this Past!"
And suddenly one half a world was cast
Into the furnace, to be forged anew.

XI.

THE HORSES OF LYSIPPUS.

At midnight, in the murtherous streets, the dew
Was blood-red, and the heavens were hurt with sound
Of shriek and wail the ransack'd region round.
So that men heard not, in the Hippodrome,
Those Four Bronze Horses, that had come from Rome,
In conference, talking each to each.
One said
"Our purple-mantled master, Power, is fled.
And how shall We Four fare? Let us away
Thro' the thick night! For ever since the day
We follow'd that great Western Cæsar home
To grace the glories of Augustine Rome,
We Four have felt no hand upon our manes
Less great than theirs, who grasp the golden reins
Of Empire; they behind whose chariot wheel
Yet-burning ruts their fervid course reveal,

Who rode the rolling world. We also, when
Power pass'd from Rome, his car drew here again,
And carried Conquest in his course divine
From West to East, to dwell with Constantine.
But now is Power departed, who knows where?
Out of the East!"

So spake that voice in air.
The others answer'd "Whither shall we go?
Our master being gone? For who doth know
Where we may find him?"

XII.

AND THE LION OF ST. MARK.

Listening in the dark,
To these replied the Lion of St. Mark.
"Power rideth on my wings. Come also ye
Whither I go, across the vassal sea.
And let us bear with us, to please him well,
Beauty, the spouse of Power. And we will dwell
Together."

Then they answer'd "Even so,
Lion! and where thou goest, we will go."

So those Five Beasts went forth. And took with them
Power, and Beauty. For whose diadem
They also brought great store of precious things,
And gather'd graven gems in golden rings,
And carved and colour'd stones, to be the dower

Of Beauty and the heritage of Power:
Clear agate cups and vases crystalline,
Porphyry, and syenite, and serpentine,
Obsidion, alabaster: statues fair
Of lucid gods: garments of richness rare:
And gold, and bronze, and silver: turkis blue
As Venus' veins: and rubies red in hue
As Adon's lips: and jasper, onyx, opal.

In this way Venice took Constantinople.

NOTES TO PART IV. OF THE SIEGE OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

[29] P. 16. *Meanwhile at sea, &c.*

For obvious reasons, justifiable, I trust, by the purposes and privileges of art, the principal details of the two Sieges have been thrown together, so as to present only a single picture.

[30] P. 28. *Myrtillus, the one Eye-brow'd, &c.*

For the sake of euphony, the Italian orthography of Murzoufle has been adopted. The name, I believe, implies the peculiar feature of its owner's physiognomy. He is said to have had but a single eyebrow, extending over both eyes, without interruption at the nose. Some say that he also squinted.

END OF BOOK VI.

BOOK VII.

LEGENDS, BALLADS, AND ROMANCES.

" Uns ist in alten mœren
Wunders vil geseit,
Von helden lobebœren,
Von grôzer kuonheit."
—*Der Nibelunge Noth.*

FAREWELL TO THE HOLY LANDS.

(ELEVENTH CENTURY.)

1.

THRICE, ho trumpeter, sound!
And around, and around
With the merry red wine once more, friends!
Then to stirrup and selle,
And away,—fare ye well,—
For my ship is at hand on the shore, friends!

2.

Shout! for Baldwin hath ta'en
All his own back again,
And O well for the brave right hands
That have won by the rood,
From the Infidel brood,
God His ground in the Holy Lands!

3.

Here's, from each and from all,
To the old Amiràl!

Fair weather to him and his bark!
For a King among Kings
Is the Lion with wings,
The strong lion of stout St. Mark!

4.

And here's now to the worth
Of the West and the North,
The hearts of the North and the West!
And the eyes and the lips
Of those sweet she-slips
Of the East, that we each loved best!

5.

Friend, praise me the dame,
Whose so soft southern name
I never could learn how to say,
Tho' I well know the bliss
Of her soft southern kiss
That hath kiss'd better knowledge away:

6.

And I'll pledge you that Greek
Learnèd Lady's loved cheek,
And the depth of her dark eye-glance,
All whose praises you sung
In the great Latin tongue
Thro' the gardens of golden Byzance.

7.

Prithee shine out afar,
Thou red-eyed Even Star,
Shine over the seas and the sands!
And so light me again
To the wood, hill, and plain
Where mine own pleasant castle stands.

8.

Far in Thüringenwald,
Far in Thüringenwald,
There the nightingale calls for me
Thro' the dewy spring night,
When the walls glimmer white
To the moon on the long dark lea.

9.

Farther still, o'er the Baltic,
Old friend, black, basaltic,
With the whirlwind grim in his grip,
There your castle awaits,
Behind close-cullised gates,
The sound of that horn at your hip:

10.

Like a snowdrop, so white,
Shy, tender, and slight,

In the window your little daughter
Is at watch for a sail,
When the twilight is pale
O'er the vast Suevonian water.

11.

But in Thüringenwald,
Oh in Thüringenwald,
My good wife is waiting me,
While the nightingale sings
To her marvellous things
Of the deeds done over the sea.

12.

Western star, merry star,
Glitter fair, glitter far
To the silvery northern climes!
Blow ye sea-breezes sweet,
Blowing homeward, and greet
My lady ten million times!

13.

Fare thee well, friend, and leader!
And farewell to thee, Cedar
On Lebanon! Fare ye well, too,
Sweet Cyprus and Sicily!
Ah, beck not so busily,
We shall not weigh anchor for you,

14.

Ye soft-eyed siren maids,
In the rich-scented shades
Of your rose-bearing gardens yonder!
We have wives over there
Of our own, all as fair,—
Far more fair, as I think,—and fonder.

15.

For the rest of my life,
Save my old hunting knife,
Not a weapon will I wear now:
And your bow and seal-spear
Friend of mine, you shall bear
Henceforth but in sport, or for show.

16.

We will hang up our mail
On a great golden nail,
And dispute which is bruised the sorest.
In a doublet of green
I will follow my Queen
Thro' the old Thuringian Forest!

DOGE ORSO'S NIGHT'S WORK.

(ELEVENTH CENTURY.)

1.

In woeful plight, a piteous sight,
The Exarch was that day
We Venice men sat round to hear
The tale he came to say.

2.

'The Greek hath lost, with little cost
The Lombard he hath won
To the iron crown, the stoutest town
That stands beneath the sun:

3.

'For, while the old wolf Luitprand
Was fighting for the Franks,
His wily nephew Hildebrand,
Among whose robber ranks

4.

'Vicenza's Duke rode unabash'd,
Hath seized Ravenna town,
And from the Imperial city dash'd
The Imperial standard down.'

5.

A joyful man the Exarch was
The morrow of that day
We Venice men set sail again
To seize the Lombard's prey.

6.

At close of day Ravenna lay
Before us on the height:
We dropp'd adown beneath the town
After the fall of night:

7.

At fall of night there was no light,
There was no noise of bells:
Without a sound we ran aground,
And fix'd our mangonels:

8.

At mid of night was sound and light
Thro' all Ravenna town:
Loud rang the bells above the yells
Of thousands trampled down:

9.

At ope of day in fetters lay
The Lombard Hildebrand:
The town was ours: about the towers
We roam'd, a merry band.

10.

The fight, God wot, was short and hot.
"Bear Hildebrand aboard.
Renew your oath," Doge Orso quoth,
"And take your lawful lord.

11.

"The Duke is dead," he laughed, and said
"The city is all our own.
Stand forth Exarch! To thee Saint Mark
Gives back Ravenna town."

12.

Then all outright for great delight
The Exarch wept, I trow.
As he had woeful been before,
So was he joyful now.

13.

By that night's cost the Lombard lost,
What our Duke Orso won
With great renown, the stoutest town
That stands beneath the sun.

SALZBURGENSIS VAGABUNDUS.

(THIRTEENTH CENTURY.)

PAX DEI VOBISCUM! We are, by your leave, friends,
Three poor travelling scholars. All the more we grieve, friends,
That now-a-days good wine's so dear, and learning still so cheap, alas!
O ghost of good Archbishop Reinhold, you for us would weep Alas!
But you have left this wicked world, and you are gone to glory.
Mihi est propositum in tabernâ mori!
All the way from Salzburg here, in this season blowy,
Bitter blue the hill tops were, bleak the roads and snowy.
Sure, a man must warm his wits when the weather pinches,
And the snow's above his boots some half dozen inches!
We from hostle on to hostle, thirsting to replenish
Empty bellies and dry throttles with a flask of Rhenish,
Set the Muses up for sale,—liquor begg'd for learning,
Not a doit for all our pains from the numskulls earning.

Little favour did'st thou get, great Horatius Flaccus,
Of our thick-skull'd Thaliarchs swilling German Bacchus!
Folly's citadel resists each classic catapulta,
Penitus inutilis, penitusque stulta!
Lord! you should have seen the looks of those unlatined laics,
Hail'd in choice hexameters, and sued to in alcaics!
Hairy Jews with money bags: troopers from Pavìa:
Hamburgers, and Bambergers .... Herr Josef! Frau Maria!
Zum Teuffel! groans my yellow Jew: the trooper growls *va vid!*
Zounds! I wish those Jews, with all my heart, into .... Judæa!
Bare-foot trots the begging Muse among this harum-scarum.
Loca vitant publica quidam poetarum.
Snug as hedgehog hid in hedge, most comfortably curl'd up,
And looking not a whit less proud than if it wrapp'd the world up,
Safe upon the mountain side, secured from all infraction,
And reckless how the plain may fare, in high self-satisfaction
Smiled this blessèd burg;—resolved we three should make a climb of it,
And cool as Lot's small city when the rest had a hot time of it.
'*Vides,*' then '*ut altâ*' ... there ... '*stet nive*' ... shouted Hax to us,

And Fritz . . . 'Tis not good wine, I trust, the little city lacks!' to us.

'*Deprome*,' then, '*quadrimum*,' I . . . so here we are among you,

Praying the Lord, good gentlefolks, your good lives to prolong you!

There's in us a thirsty devil raging to consume us.

Salutemus igitur bibuli qui sumus!

Sure, you haven't heard the news? The Hohenstaufen . . . Zooks there!

Is that mine host's fair daughter? 'Faith, I knew her by her looks there.

Illa formosissimis tam nota virgo brachiis!

The brute that's not in love with her no better than a lackey is!

What's the little lady's name? To *Lina* rhymes *divina*.

Dear demozel, if I were *Rex*, I know who'd be *Regina*.

See her foot and ankle fine! if you'd a soul for beauty

You'd fit me with the proper phrase . . . *egregia juventute!*

Sir, will you buy an epitaph for your now-sainted lady?

Something pious, chaste, and sweet, to suit the yew-trees shady?

Hax, here, with his lanthorn jaws . . . Beseech you only try Hax!

He'll turn you off in half a trice a score of elegiacs.

Sic solamine non carebis for the dear departed.

Or you, young lord, a lovesong fierce, impassion'd, fiery-hearted,

For your heart's queen with strong black eyes . . . or blue?
It matters little.
Fritz there, with his woman's face, will paint her to a tittle.
Fritz knows all the pretty things in Ovid and Tibullus,
For all his looks demure . . . *non facit monachum cucullus.*
Whate'er you want we'll furnish you, *cantandum aut scribendum,*
But if you want a drinksong, come to me for *Nunc bibendum!*

A KING AND A QUEEN.

WILLIAM OF LORIS TO THE LADY OF THE ROSE.

1.

Rise, my Queen, and away with me!
From the kingdoms where I am King
Two Spirits to lead me to thee
Have outspeeded the wild bird's wing.

2.

For the sake of thy dear dark eyes
My soul have I given this Twain;
Who are pledged to win me the prize
I die if I do not obtain:

3.

Yet they are not Spirits accurst,
But each is a delicate Sprite:
And Sleep is the name of the first,
The name of the second is Night.

4.

O hearken! O hearken! Our horses
Are waiting for thee and for me.
More fleet than the wind in his courses,
More strong than the hurricanes be,

5.

They shall bear us, nor ever tire,
Over hollow, and hill, and stream:
The name of the one is Desire,
The name of the other is Dream.

6.

Away! I am thine, thou art mine:
One body, and spirit, and heart!
Stoop! midsummer leaps in the wine
I pour to thee, ere we depart.

7.

List! midsummer melodies stray
From the strings of my throbbing lute,
With music to lead us away
Thro' the dim world starry and mute!

8.

The lute is of fanciful fashion,
The wine strong, and tender, and bright:
And the name of the wine is Passion,
The name of the lute is Delight.

9.

On the strand is anchor'd my boat:
It is built to live in all seas;
We have but to set it afloat,
It will bear us far as we please;

10.

For it is so light that, in sooth,
'Twill sink not, tho' loaded with treasures:
The name of the helmsman is Youth,
The crew that he pilots are Pleasures.

11.

But linger not now, for 'tis late,
And we have the world to go thro'.
Poor world! 'tis in such a sad state,
It surely hath need of us two;

12.

So much that needs setting to rights!
Hate, massacre, murder, and war . . . .
But . . . how sweet are these midsummer nights!
Shall we let things rest as they are?

13.

At least we must travel in state,
Since a king and a queen are we:
And scatter our largesse, elate
And lavish as monarchs should be.

14.

Before us our herald shall go:
And their gates all cities shall ope,
When his clarion he doth blow,
For our herald his name is Hope:

15.

Our almoner cometh behind,
And he singeth a saintly hymn:
He is wealthy, and wise, and kind,
Gentle Memory men call him.

16.

To the sweet, the afar, the unseen,
Fair, joyous, majestic, and free,
Lead by Sleep and by Night, my Queen,
Away, through the world, now, with me!

17.

And the world shall do us sweet duty,
As royally thro' it we move:
For thou art a queen—thou art Beauty,
And I am a king—I am Love!

FAIR YOLAND WITH THE YELLOW HAIR.

I.

A KNIGHT that wears no lady's sleeve
Upon his helm from dawn to eve,
And all night long beneath the throng
Of throbbing stars, without reprieve
My moan I make, as on I ride
Along waste lands and waters wide,
The haunts of bitterns; smoky strips
Of sea-coast where there come no ships;
Or over brambly hump-back'd downs,
And under walls of hilly towns,
And out again across the plain,
Oft borne beneath a hissing rain
Within the murmurs of the wind,
That doth at nightfall leave his lair
To follow and vex me; till I find
Fair Yoland with the yellow hair.

II.

On a field azure, all pure or,
A fountain springing evermore
To reach one star that, just too far
For its endeavour, trembles o'er
The topmost spray its strength will yield,
For my device upon my shield
Long since I wrought; and under it
Along a scroll of flame is writ
The legend, thus . . . "I SHALL ATTAIN."
In letters large: albeit "In vain!"
My heart replies to mock mine eyes;
For where that fountain seems to rise
Its highest, it is back consign'd
To earth, and falls in void despair,
Like my sad seven-years' hope to find
Fair Yoland with the yellow hair.

III.

Seven years ago (how long it seems
Since then!) as free as summer streams
My fancy play'd with sun and shade,
And all my days were dim with dreams.
One day—I wot not whence nor how
It flash'd upon me—even now
I marvel at the change it wrought!
My whole life leapt into one thought,

Which thought was made my lifelong act;
As, dash'd in dazzling cataract,
From its long sleeps, at last outleaps
Some lazy ooze, which henceforth keeps
One steadfast way; so all my mind
Was in that moment made aware
That henceforth I must die, or find
Fair Yoland with the yellow hair.

IV.

Since then, how many lands and climes
Have I ransack'd—how many times
Been bruised with blows—how many foes
Have dealt to death—how many crimes
Avenged—how many maidens freed!
And yet I seem to be, indeed,
No nearer to the endless quest.
Neither by night nor day I rest:
My heart burns in me like a fire:
My soul is parch'd with long desire:
Ghostlike I grow: and where I go,
I hear men mock and mutter low
And feel men's fingers point behind—
"The moon-struck knight that talks to air!
Lord help the fool who hopes to find
Fair Yoland with the yellow hair!"

v.

At times, in truth, I start, and shake
Myself from thought, as one men wake
From some long trance to hard mischance,
Who knows not yet what choice to make
'Twixt false and true, since all things seem
Mere fragments of his broken dream,
When I recal what men aver,
That all my lifelong quest of her
Is vain and void; since thrice (say they)
Three hundred years are rolled away,
And knights forgot, whose bones now rot,
And their good deeds remember'd not,
Fail'd one by one, long ere I pined
For this strange quest; whence they declare
No living wight may hope to find
Fair Yoland with the yellow hair.

vi.

Ah me! . . . For Launcelot maketh cheer
With great-eyed, glorious Guinevere;
In glad green wood; with Queen Isoud
Tristram of Lyones hunts the deer;
In cool of bloomy trellises
Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris,
After long labours brought to end,
With their two dames in joyance spend

The blue June hours ; Sir Agravaine
With Dame Laurell along the main
Seeks his new home ; and Pelleas
Sits smiling calm in halls of glass
At Nimuë's knees. Good knights be these
Because they have their hearts at ease,
Because their lives and loves are joined :
O if two hearts in one life were,
What life were that ! . . . God let me find
Fair Yoland with the yellow hair !

VII.

Mere life is vile. I may have done
Deeds not unworthy, and have won
Unwilling fame ; tho' all men blame
This heart's unrest which makes me shun
The calm content that good men take
From good deeds done for good deeds' sake,
Deeds that in doing of the deed
Do bless the doer, who should need
No bliss beyond : but what to me
Is this,—that over land and sea
My name should fly ? Or what care I,
For the mere sake of climbing high,
To climb for ever steps that wind
Up empty towers ? I only wear
Life hollow thus, unless I find
Fair Yoland with the yellow hair.

VIII.

Sometimes, whom I to free from wrong
Have dragons fought, strange folk do throng
About my steed, and lightly lead
My horse and me, with shout and song,
In banner'd castle-courts ; and there
From chambers cool come dames most fair,
Whose forms as thro' a cloud I see ;
Whose voices seem far off to be ;
Tho' near they stand, and bid me rest
Awhile within, where, richly drest,
In order stored, with goblets poured,
I see the sparkling banquet-board ;
But far from these is all my mind,
For . . . "What if foes, whom I must scare,
In noisome den now seek to bind
Fair Yoland with the yellow hair ?"

IX.

In deepest dark, when no moon shines
Thro' the blind night on the black pines
With bony boughs, if I, to drouse
(As sometimes mere despair inclines
A frame outworn) should slip from horse,
And lay me down along the gorse,
In some cold hollow far away
A little while—albeit I pray

Ere I lie down—my dreams are drear:
First comes a slowly-creeping fear,
Like icy dew, that seems to glue
My limbs to earth, and freeze them thro',
Then a long shriek on a wild wind,
And "O," I think, "if her's it were,
And I a murder'd corpse should find
Fair Yoland with the yellow hair!"

x.

Sometimes 'neath dropping white rose-leaves
I ride, and under gilded eaves
Of garden bowers where, plucking flowers,
With scarlet skirts and stiff gold sleeves,
Between green walls, and two by two,
Kings' daughters walk, whilst just a few
Faint harps make music mild, that falls
Like mist from off the ivied walls
Along the sultry corn, and stirs
The hearts of far-off harvesters;
Then, on the brink of hope, I shrink
With shuddering strange, the while I think
"O what if, after body and mind
Consumed in toil, and all my care,
Not a corpse, but a bride, I find
Fair Yoland with the yellow hair?"

XI.

But when at night's most lonely noon,
The ghost of an ill-buried moon
Frets in the shroud of a cold cloud,
And, like the echo of a tune,
Within mine ear the silence makes
A yearning sound that throbs and aches,
A whisper sighs . . . "The grave is deep,
There is no better thing than sleep.
Life's fever speeds its own decease,
Let the mole work: be thou at peace."
Yet why should this fair earth, which is
So fair, so fit to furnish bliss,
Prove a mere failure—stuff design'd
By Hope to clothe her foe Despair?
And whence, if vain, this need to find
Fair Yoland with the yellow hair?

XII.

This grieving after unknown good,
Though but a sickness in the blood,
Cries from the dust. And God is just.
No rock denies the raven food.
For who would torture, night by night,
Some starving creature with the sight
Of banquets fair with plenty spread,
Then mock . . . "crawl empty thou to bed,

"And dream of viands not for thee!"
Yet night by night, dear God, to me,
In wake or sleep, such visions creep
To gnaw my heart with hunger deep.
How can I meet dull death, resign'd
To die the fool of dreams so fair?
Nay, love hath seen, and life shall find,
Fair Yoland with the yellow hair!

XIII.

Good Pilgrim, to whatever shrine,
With whatsoever vows of thine,
Thou wendest, stay! I charge thee, pray
That God may bless this quest of mine.
Sweet maidens, whom from losel hands
Mine own have freed—in many lands,
I bid you each, when ye shall be
With your good knights, remember me!
And wish me well,—that some day I
May find fair Yoland; else I die
In love's defeat. To die were sweet,
If, dying, I might clasp her feet.
Death comes at last to all mankind;
Yet ere I die, I know not where,
I know not how, but I must find
Fair Yoland with the yellow hair.

TRIAL BY COMBAT.

THE doleful wind around around
The turret, trying to enter here,
Whines low, while down in the court-yard drear
The great bloodhound, to the flint fast bound,
Is baying the moon. The moon is clear
And dismal-cold: because a Fear,
Whose cat'sfoot falls with no more sound
Than an eyelid that sinks on a sick man's swound,
Is lord of her light; whereby tonight
He walketh alone on the frozen mere
From the wood whence he cometh anear,—anear!
Ever, about the setting in
Of the darkness, now for a month or more,
The things on the gusty arras 'gin
To rustle and creep and mope and grin
At me, still sitting as heretofore
This last sad night (no whit less calm
Than when first he accused me a month before)
With elbow based on knee, and palm

Upslanted, propping a moody chin ;
The better to watch with a glassy eye
The dull red embers drop, and lie
Forlorn of a lurid inner light,
Like days burn'd out by a deadly sin.
I marvel much if my mind be right,
All seems so wondrous calm within
This long o'er-laboured heart, in spite
Of the howling wind and the hideous night,
And to-morrow that bringeth the final fight
When all is to lose or win.

What matter the end, so it be near?
I can only think of how last year
We rode together, she and I :
She in scarlet and I in green,
Across the oak-wood dark and high,
Whose wicked leaves shut out the sky;
Which, had I seen, that had not been,
I think, which makes me fear to die
And meet her there. I could not bear
Her dead face e'en. Who else, I ween,
Should hardly shrink from Conrad's eye,
For all his vaunting, not so keen,
The too-soon boasting braggart (ay
Even when he strode before the Queen,
And three times charged me with the lie !)

As my keen axe. More glad that day
She was, sure, than 'tis good to be,
Lest some, that cannot be so glad
As she was then, should chance go mad,
Trying to laugh. Oh, all the way
She laughed so loud that even the wood
Laugh'd too. She seem'd so sure, that day,
That life is sweet and God is good.
I could not laugh; because her hood
Had fallen back, and so let stray
Of all her long hair's loveliness
A single shining yellow tress
Across her shoulder; which made me
(That could not choose, poor fool! but see)
More sad, I think, than men should be
When women laugh. The wood, I say,
Laugh'd with her, at me, all the way.

Once, too, her palfrey, while we rode,
Started aside, and in alarm
She lean'd her hand upon my arm;
Whose light touch did so overload
My heavy heart, that I believe,
Had she a moment longer so
Lean'd on me, from my saddle-bow
I must have dropped down dead.

Near eve
We came out on the other land.
And I remember that I said,
"How still and lone the land is here!"
She only look'd, and shook her head,
And, looking, laugh'd still louder, and
Said, laughing loudly, "What's to fear?"
The accursèd echo, that low lay
Under that lonesome land, I knew,
For want of aught more wise to say,
Shriek'd "Fear!" and fell a-laughing too.
Deep melancholy meadow-grass,
Which never any man had mown,
So long our horses scarce could pass
Thro' the thick-heap'd unheaving mass
Of heavy stalks, by no breath blown
Of any wind, all round was grown,
For some bad purpose of its own,
Up to the edge of the grey sky.
And underneath a stream ran by:
A little stream, that made great moan,
Half mad with pain, the Fiend knows why:
'Twixt stupid heaps of helpless stone,
That chose upon its path to lie
Unreasonably, purpose none
Subserving (there resolved to stay
For spite's sake, with nor use nor grace)
It push'd and dash'd at desperate pace,

In extreme haste to get away.
The owls might fly about by day,
For all the sky, there, had to say;
Which took no care to change its face
To any other hue but grey,
Having to light up such a place.
But for the moan of that mad stream
All things were dumb, resign'd, and still,
And strange, as things are in a dream.
The whole land self-surrender'd lay,
And let harsh Nature work her will,
For lack of strength to answer nay
To any sort of wrong or ill
That chose to vex it. Laughing gay
Into that lonesome land rode she.
The grass above her palfrey's knee
Was long and green as green could be.
She, laughing as she rode, 'gan trill
Some canzonet or virelay;
It matter'd little, good or ill,
Whate'er the song, if any way
It eased her heart of laughter shrill.
Of trees were only blackthorns three,
Low-clump'd upon the ugly hill,
Like witches when, to watch the weather,
They crook their backs and squat together.

We 'lighted down beneath those trees

Whereto did I our horses tether;
And on a bough I hung my shield.
She went up higher in the field,
And down her long limbs laid at ease
In the deep grass; which up and down,
Wave after wave of green, heaved over
Her bright gold-border'd scarlet gown;
And all but her small face did cover.
For now, out of some land unshown
Behind the grassy upland, low
A little wind began to blow
Faintly, and the dull air was strown
With a moist sickly scent of clover.

She, slanted o'er her propping arm,
Look'd smiling sideways with a charm
To catch me; while, now forwards, now
Backwards, she swung with saucy brow
Her gold curls, like a gorgeous snake
That lifts and leans on lolling fold
A lustrous head, but half awake
From winter dreams when, coy and cold,
Spring stirs about the rustling brake.
She call'd me to her thro' the grass:
She call'd me "Friend:" she said I was
"Her Ritter of the rueful face:
But I," she said, "am never sad."
Therewith she laugh'd. The hateful place

Laugh'd too: resolved to make me mad.
I went, and sat beside her there,
And gazed upon her glittering hair.
Musing, I said, "Twill soon be night;
Night must be very lonely here."
She look'd at me, and laugh'd outright,
And, laughing, answer'd, "What's to fear?"
But "Fear!" the echo, laughing light,
Still added. It was hard to bear.
Long sat I silent in her sight,
Much musing. When I spoke at last
It may have been that all I said
Marr'd all I meant—for there was pass'd
Like burning lead, about my head
And on my brain, a heavy pain,
And "Oh," I cried, "if it would rain,
And bring some change!"—Yet this I know,
That, soon as I had ended, she
Look'd thro' her glittering hair at me,
Full in my face, and laugh'd again,
And answered "Never! let this be
A thing forgot between us twain."
So, back beneath the black-thorn tree,
Where my shield hung, I went away
A little while, and sat apart.
I could not speak: I could not pray:
I thought it was because my heart
Was in my throat—it choked me so!

But now the devil's claw, I know,
It was, that would not let me go;
Me by the throat so fast he had.
Enough! You think that I went mad?
By no means. I grew strong and wise,
Went back, look'd boldly in her eyes,
And stopp'd her laughing. It was she,
Not I, that trembled. I could see
The woman was afraid of me.
What wonder? I myself had been
Already, such a wöeful long
Wild while (even ere he wax'd thus strong,
And let his wicked face be seen)
Afraid, too, of the fiend within
My heart; whereof she was the Queen,
Feeding him with the food of sin,
Forbidden beauty. Then I knew
That she was all mine thro' and thro',
Whatever I might choose to do.
Mine, from the white brow's hiding-place
Under the roots of golden hair
That glitter'd round her frighten'd face;
Mine, from the warmth and odour there
Down to the tender feet that were
Mine too to guess in each great fold
Of scarlet bound about with gold.
So I grew dainty with my pleasure;
And, as a miser counts the treasure

His heart is loth to spend too fast,
So did mine eye take note and measure
Of all my new-gain'd wealth. At last
The Fiend, impatient to be gone,
Brought this to end.

When all was done,
I seem'd to know what was to be,
And how 'twould fare henceforth with me,
Who must ride home now all alone:
I knew that I should never see
The face of God, nor ever hear
Her laugh again. And so it was.
Yet 'twas not mine, that blow, I swear.
Nor did I know it, till the grass
Was red and wet. When Conrad tries
To charge me with that deed, he lies!
And lies! and lies! Who could have guess'd
That she had hidden in her breast,
Or in her girdle (what know I?),
A dagger? Did she mean to die
Always,—even when she seem'd so proud,
So sure of life? Ay, when so loud
She laugh'd that day? I only know
I would have given these two hands,
The moment I beheld her so,
Ay, all my lordships, all my lands,
If but on me had fall'n that blow,

Not her. Oh what were Hell's worst pain
If I might hear her laugh again?

It must have been an hour or more
I think (it seem'd long years) before
I, sitting there beside her still,
And listening, heard a sound of rain
In the three black-thorns on the hill.
"Too late it comes," I thought, "and vain,
For nothing here will change now." Chill
The evening grew. A wet wind blew
About the billowy grass. A few
Large drops fell sullenly. I thought
"How cold she will be here all night
In this wet meadow!" Then I caught
(For by this time her lips were white,
Not red; nor warm, but rigid quite)
At the tall grass, and heap'd and mass'd
Great handfuls of it, which I cast
Over her feet, and on her face;
But first drew down her scarlet gown
Over her limbs composed and meek
In great calm folds; and, o'er her cheek,
Smooth'd the bright hair; and all the place
Where the black redness oozed, I hid
With heaps of grass. All this I did
Quite quietly, as a mother might
Put her sick child to sleep. 'T was night

Ere I had ended. A dull moon
Across the smearing rain reveal'd
A melancholy light, and soon
Began to peer about the field
To find what still the fresh grass kept
Well hidden. Then I think I crept
Down to the little stream ; and stood
A long while looking at the wood,
Wondering what ever I should do.
There was a spot of blood I knew
Upon my hand. I did not dare
To wash it, lest the water there
Too far away the stain should bear,
And so make all the world aware
Of what was done.

The cock crows—hark!
Before his time, sure. Deep in dark
The drowsy land is lying yet.
Yon frosty cloud hides up the moon,
But I am sure she is not set.
To-morrow? Is it come so soon?
Well, let it come! A hundred eyes
Can make no worse the eyes I scorn.
For in his throat Count Conrad lies,
And on his body am I sworn
To prove the same this very morn.
Let Kaiser Henry range his state;

To mark the issue of my fate,
The lords of every Landgravate
From Rhine to Rhone, with looks elate,
Like gods between the earth and sky,
May crowd each golden balcony.
Come, Kaiser, call the fight!
Let the great trumpet blare on high
As tho' the Judgment Angel blew
The blast that bids the wicked rue;
Now, Conrad, to the lists, and smite
Thy very worst! I reck not, I,
Not tho' the dead should come to sight,
Nor tho' a hundred heralds cry,
"On! God maintain the right!"

RABBI BEN EPHRAIM'S TREASURE.

PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS IN SPAIN.

(FIFTEENTH CENTURY.)

I.

THE days of Rabbi Ben Ephraim
Were two score years and ten, the day
The hangman call'd at last for him,
And he privily fled from Cordova.
Drop by drop, he had watch'd the cup
Of the wine of bitterness fill'd to the brim;
Drop by drop, he had drain'd it up;
And the time was an evil time for him.
An evil time! For Jehovah's face
Was turn'd in wrath from His chosen race,
And the daughter of Judah must mourn,
Whom His anger had left, in evil case,
To be dogg'd by death from place to place,
With garments bloody and torn.
The time of the heavy years, from of old
By the mouth of His servant the Prophet foretold,

In the days of Josiah the king,
When the Lord upon Jacob his load should bring,
And the hand of Heaven, in the day of His ire,
Be heavy and hot upon son and sire,
Till from out of the holes into which they were driven
Their bones should be strown to the host of Heaven
Whose bodies were burn'd in the fire.
Rabbi Ben Ephraim, day by day
(As the hangman, beating up his bounds
Thro' the stifled Ghetto's sinks and stews,
Or the Arch Inquisitor, going his rounds,
Was pleased to pause, and pick, and choose,
—Too sure of his game, which could not stray,
To miss the luxury of delay)
Had mark'd with a moody indignation
The abomination of desolation,
With the world to witness, and none to gainsay,
Set up in the midst of the Holy Nation,
And the havoc, which Heaven refused to stay,
In the course of his horrible curse move on,
Where, sometimes driven in trembling crews,
Sometimes singly one by one,
Israel's elders were beckon'd away
To the place where the Christians burn the Jews:
Till he, because that his wealth was known,
And because the king had debts to pay,
Was left, at the last, almost alone
Of all his people in Cordova,

A living man picked out by fate
To bear, and beware of, the daily jibe,
And add the same to the sum of the hate,
Made his on behalf of a slaughter'd tribe.

II.

In the gloomy Ghetto's gloomiest spot,
A certain patch of putrid ground,
There is a place of tombs : Moors rot,
Rats revel there, and devils abound
By night, no cross being there to keep
The evil things in awe : the dead
That house there, sleep no Christian sleep—
They do not sleep at all, it is said ;
Tho' how they fare, the Fiend best knows,
Who never vouchsafes to them any repose,
For their worm is awake in the narrow bed,
And the fire that will never be quench'd is fed
On the night that will never close.
There did Rabbi Ben Ephraim
(When he saw, at length, the appointed measure
Of misery meted out to him)
Bury his books, and all his treasure.
Books of wisdom many a one—
All the teaching of all the ages,
All the learning under the sun,
Learn'd by all the Hebrew sages
To Eliphaz from Solomon ;

Not to mention the mystic pages
Of Nathan the son of Shimeon
The Seer, which treat of the sacred use
Of the number Seven (quoth the Jews
"A secret sometime filch'd from us
By one call'd Apollonius"),
The science of the even and odd,
The signs of the letters Aleph and Jod,
And the seven magical names of God.

Furthermore, he laid in store
Many a vessel of beaten ore,
Pure, massy, rich with rare device
Of Florence-work wrought under and o'er,
Shekels of silver, and stones of price,
Sardius, sapphire, topaz, more
In number than may well be told,
Milan stuffs, and merchandise
Of Venice, the many times bought and sold.
He buried them deep where none might mark
—Hid them from sight of the hated race,
Gave them in guard of the Powers of the Dark
And solemnly set his curse on the place.
Then he saddled his mule, and with him took
Zillah his wife, and Rachel his daughter,
And Manassah his son; and turn'd and shook
The dust from his foot on the place of slaughter,
And cross'd the night, and fled away

(Balking the hangman of his prey)
From out of the city of Cordova.

III.

Rabbi Ben Ephraim never more
Saw Cordova. For the Lord had will'd
That the dust should be dropp'd on his eyes before
The curse upon Israel was fulfill'd.
Therefore he ended the days of his life
In evil times; and by the hand
Of Rachel his daughter, and Zillah his wife,
Was laid to rest in another land.
But, before his face to the wall he turn'd,
As the eyes of the women about his bed
Grew hungry and hard with a hope unfed,
And the misty lamp more misty burn'd,
To Zillah and Rachel the Rabbi said
Where they might find, if fate turn'd kind,
And the fires in Cordova, grown slack,
Should ever suffer their footsteps back,
The tomb where by stealth he had buried his wealth
In the evil place, when in dearth and lack
He fled from the foe, and the stake, and the rack;

IV.

"A strand of colours, clear to be seen

By the main black cord of it twined between
The scarlet, the golden, and the green :
All the length of the Moorish wall the line
Runs low with his mystic serpent-twine,
Until he is broken against the angle
Where thin grizzled grasses dangle
Like dead men's hairs, from the weeds that clot
The scurfy side of a splinter'd pot,
Upon the crumbled cornice squat,
Gaping, long-ear'd, in his hue and shape
Like a Moor's head cut off at the nape.
The line, till it touches the angle follow,
Take pebbles then in the hand and drop
Stone after stone till the ground sounds hollow.
Thence walk left, till there starts, to stop
Your steps, a thorn-tree with an arm
Stretch'd out as tho' some mad alarm
Had seized upon it from behind.
It points the way until you find
A flat square stone, with letters cut.
Stoop down to lift it, 'twill not move,
More than you move a mountain, but
Upon the letter which is third
Of seven in the seventh word
Press with a finger, and you shove
Its weight back softly, as the South
Turns a dead rose lightly over :
Back falls it, and there yawns earth's mouth ;

Wherein the treasure is yet to discover,
By means of a spiral cut down the abyss
To the dead men."

v.

When he had utter'd this
Rabbi Ben Ephraim turn'd his face,
And slept.

vi.

The yēars went on apace.
Manassah his son, his youngest born,
Trading the isleted sea for corn,
Was wreck'd and pick'd up by the smuggler boat
Of a certain prowling Candiote;
And, being young and hale, was sold
By the Greek a bondsman to the Turk.
Zillah, his wife, wax'd white and old.
Rachel, his daughter, loved not work,
But walk'd by the light of her own dark eyes
In wicked ways for the sake of gain.
Meanwhile, Israel's destinies
Survived the scorching stake, and Spain
At length grew weary of burning men;
When hunger'd, and haggard, and gaunt, these two
Forlorn Jew women crept again
Into Cordova; because they knew
Where Rabbi Ben Ephraim by stealth,

When he turn'd his back on his own house-door,
Had buried the whole of his wondrous wealth
In the evil place ; and they two were poor.

VII.

So poor indeed, they had been constrain'd
To filch from the refuse flung out to the streets
('Mid the rags and onion-peelings rain'd
Where the town's worst gutter's worst filth greets
With his strongest gust and most savoury sweets
Those blots and failures of Human Nature,
Refused a name in her nomenclature,
That spawn themselves toward night, and bend
To finger the husks and shucks heap'd there,)
The wretched, rat-bitten candle-end
Which, found by good luck, they had treasured with care
Not a whit less solemn than tho' it were
That famous work of the son of Uri,
The candlestick of candlesticks,
—He the long-lost light of Jewry,
Whose almond bowls and scented wicks
Were the boast of the desert, and Salem's glory
Of the knops and flowers, with his branches six !
For this impov'rish'd, curtail'd, flaw'd,
Maltreated, worried, gnaw'd and claw'd
Remnant of what perchance made bright
Once, for laughter and delight,

Some chamber gay, with arras hung,
Whose marbles, mirrors, and flowers among
A lover, his lady's lute above,
To a dear dark-eyelash'd listener sung
Of the flame of a never-dying love,
—Little heeding, meanwhile, the fitful spite
Of the night-wind's mad and mocking sprite,
Which stealthily in at the lattice sprung,
And was wrying the taper's neck apace,—
Must now, with its hungry half-starved light,
Make bold the shuddering flesh to face
The sepulchre's supernatural night,
And the Powers of the Dark keeping guard on the place.

VIII.

And, when to the place of tombs they came,
The spotted moon sunk. Night stood bare
In the waste unlighted air
Wide-arm'd, waiting, and aware,
To horribly hem them in. The flame
The little candle feebly gave,
As it wink'd and winced from grave to grave,
Went fast to furious waste; the same
As a fever-famisht human hope
That is doom'd, from grief to grief, to grope
On darkness blind to a doubtful goal,
And, sway'd by passion here and there

In conflict with some vast despair,
Consumes the substance of the soul
In wavering ways about the world.
The deep enormous night unfurl'd
Her banner'd blackness left and right,
Fold heap'd on fold, to mock such light
With wild defiance ; no star pearl'd
The heavy pall, but horror hurl'd
Shadow on shadow ; while for spite
The very graves kept out of sight,
And heaven's sworn hatred, winning might
From earth's ill-will, with darkness curl'd
Darkness, all space confounding quite,
So to engender night on night.

IX.

"Rachel, Rachel, for ye are tall,
Lift the light along the wall."

"Mother, mother, give me the hand,
And follow!"

"What see ye, Rachel?"

X.

A strand
Of chorded colours, clear to be seen

By the main black dominant, twined between
The scarlet, the golden, and the green.

XI.

"Rachel, Rachel, ye walk so fast!"

"Mother, the light will barely last."

"What see ye, Rachel?"

XII.

Things that dangle
Hairy and grey o'er the wall's choked angle
From something dull, in hue and shape
Like a Moor's head cut off at the nape.

XIII.

"Once! twice! thrice! . . . the earth sounds hollow.
Mother, give me the hand, and follow."

"Rachel, the flame is backward blowing,
Pusht by the darkness. Where are we going?
The ground is agroan with catacombs!
What see ye, Rachel?"

XIV.

Yonder comes

A thorn-tree with a desperate arm
Flung out fierce in wild alarm
Of something which, it madly feels,
The night to plague it yet conceals.
No help it gets tho'! An owl dash'd out
Of the darkness, steering his ghostliness thither,
Pry'd in at the boughs, and pass'd on with a shout
From who-knows-whence to who-knows-whither:
The unquiet Spirit abroad on the air
Moved with a moan that way, and spent
A moment or more in the effort to vent
On the tortured tree which he came to scare
The sullen fit of his discontent;
But, laughing low as he grew aware
Of the long-already-imposed despair
Of the terrified thing he had paused to torment,
He pass'd, pursuing his purpose elsewhere,
And follow'd the whim of his wicked bent:
A rheumy glow-worm, come to peer
Into the hollow trunk, crawl'd near,
And glimmer'd awhile, but intense fear,
Or tame connivance with something wrong
Which the night was intending, quench'd ere long
His lantern. Therefore the tree remains,
For all its gestures void and vain,
Which still at their utmost fail to explain
Any natural cause for the terror that strains
Each desperate limb to be freed and away,

In sheer paralysis of dismay
Struck stark,—and so, night's abject, stands.

XV.

"Mother, the candle is cowering low
Beneath the night-gust: hoop both hands
About the light, and stoop over, so
The wind from the buffeted flame to shut,
Lest at once in our eyes the darkness blow."

"What see ye, Rachel?"

XVI.

A square stone cut
With letters. Thick the moss is driven
Thro' the graver's work now blunt and blurr'd:
There be seven words with letters seven:
A finger-touch on the letter third
Of seven in the seventh word,
And the stone is heaved back: earth yawns and gapes:
A cold strikes up the clammy dark,
And clings: a spawn of vaporous shapes
Floats out in films: a sanguine spark
The taper spits: the snaky stair
Gleams, curling down the abyss laid bare,
Where Rabbi Ben Ephraim's treasure is laid.

XVII.

There, they sat them down awhile,
With that terrible joy which cannot smile
Because the heart of it is staid
And stunn'd, as it were, by a too swift pace.
And the wicked Presence abroad on the place
So took them with awe that they rested afraid
Almost to look into each other's face.
Moreover, the nearness of what should change,
Like a change in a dream, their lives for ever,
Into something suddenly bright and strange,
Paused upon them, and made them shiver.
The old woman mumbled at length: "I am old:
I have no sight the treasure to find;
I have no strength to rake the red gold;
My hand is palsied, mine eye is blind,
Child of my bosom, I dare not descend
To the horrible pit!"

And Rachel said:
"I fear the darkness, I fear the dead;
But the candle is burning fast to the end:
We waste the time with words. Look here!
There rests between us and the dark
A few short inches. . . . Mother, mark
The wasting taper! . . . I should not fear

Either the darkness or the dead,
But for certain memories in my head
Which daunt me. . . . We will go, we twain,
Together."

The old woman cried again:
"Child of my bosom, I will not descend
To the horrible pit—and the candle-end
Is burning down, God curse the same!
I am old, and cannot help myself.
Young are ye! What your beauty brings
Who knows? I think ye keep the pelf.
Ye will let me starve. So the serpent stings
The bosom it lay in! Are ye so tame
Of spirit? I marvel why we came.
Poverty is the worst of things!"

Rachel look'd at the dwindling flame,
And frown'd, and mutter'd, "Mother, shame!
I fear the darkness, because there clings
To my heart a thought, I cannot smother,
Of certain things which, whatever the blame,
Thou wottest of, and I will not name;
For my sins are many and heavy, mother.
Yet because I hunger, and still would save
Some years from sin, and because of my brother
Whom the Greek man sold to be slave to a slave,
(May the Lord requite the lying knave!)

I will go down alone to the pit.
Thou therefore, mother, watch, and sit
In prayer for me, by the mouth of the grave.
The light will hardly last me, I fear.
And what is to do must be quickly done.
—Mercy on us, mother! . . . Look here
Three inches more, and the light will be gone!
Quick, mother, the candle—quick! I fear
To be left in the darkness alone."

XVIII.

The mother sat by the grave, and listen'd.
She waited: she heard the footsteps go
Under the earth, wandering, slow.
She look'd: deep down the taper glisten'd.
Then, the voice of Rachel from below:

"Mother, mother, stoop and hold!"

And she flung up four ouches of gold.
The old woman counted them, ouches four,
Beaten out of the massy ore.

"Child of my bosom, blessèd art thou!
The hand of the Lord be yet with thee!
As thou art strong in thy spirit now,
Many and pleasant thy days shall be.

As a vine in a garden, fair to behold,
Green in her branches, shalt thou grow,
And so have gladness when thou art old.
Rachel, Rachel, be thou bold!
More gold yet, and still more gold!"

"Mother, mother, the light burns low.
The candle is one inch shorter now,
And I dare not be left in the darkness alone."

"Rachel, Rachel, go on! go on!
Of thee have I said, She shall not shrink!
Thy brother is yet a bondsman—think!
Yet once more,—and he is free.
And whom shall he praise for this but thee?
Rachel, Rachel, be thou bold!
Manassah is groaning over the sea.
More gold yet, and still more gold!"

"Mother, mother, stoop and hold!"

And she flung up from below again
Cups of the carven silver twain.
Solid silver was each great cup.
The old woman caught them as they came up.
"Rachel, Rachel, well hast thou done!
Manassah is free. Go on! go on!
Royal dainties for ever be thine!

Rachel's eyes shall be red with wine,
Rachel's mouth shall with milk be fill'd,
And her bread be fat. I praise thee, my child,
For surely thou hast freed thy brother.
The deed was good, but there resteth another,
And art thou not the child of thy mother?
Once more, Rachel, yet once more!
Thy mother is very poor and old.
Must she close her eyes before
They see the thing she would behold?
More gold yet, and still more gold!"

"Mother, the light is very low.
The candle is well-nigh wasted now,
And I dare not be left in the darkness alone."

"Rachel, Rachel, go on! go on!
Much is done, but there resteth more.
Ye are young, Rachel, shall it be told
That my bones were laid at my children's door?
More gold yet, and still more gold!"

"Mother, mother, stoop and hold!"

The voice came fainter from beneath;
And she flung up a jewell'd sheath.
The sheath was thick with many a gem;
The old woman carefully counted them.

"Rachel, Rachel, thee must I praise,
Who makest pleasant thy mother's days.
Blessèd be thou in all thy ways!
Surely for this must I praise thee, my daughter,
And therefore in fulness shalt thou dwell
As a fruitful fig-tree beside the water
That layeth her green leaves over the well.
More gold, Rachel, yet again!
And we shall have houses and servants in Spain,
And thou shalt walk with the wealthiest ladies,
And fairest, in Cordova, Seville, or Cadiz,
And thou shalt be woo'd as a Queen should be,
And tended upon as the proud are tended,
And the algazuls shall doff to thee,
For thy face shall be brighten'd, thy raiment be splendid,
And no man shall call thee an evil name,
And thou shalt no longer remember thy shame,
And thy mother's eyes, as she waxes old,
Shall see the thing she would behold—
More gold yet, and still more gold!"

"Mother, the light is very low—
—Out! out! . . . Ah God, they are on me now!
Mother" (the old woman hears with a groan),
"Leave me not here in the darkness alone!"

The mother sits by the grave, and listens.

She waits: she hears the footsteps go
Far under the earth,—bewilder'd—slow.
She looks: the light no longer glistens.
Still the voice of Rachel from below,

"Mother, mother, they have me, and hold!
Mother, there is a curse on thy gold!
Mercy! mercy! The light is gone—
Leave me not here in the darkness alone—
Mother, mother, help me and save!"

Still Rachel's voice from the grave doth moan.
Still Rachel's mother sits by the grave.

CATTERINA CORNARO.

(A PICTURE.—A.D. 1470.)

I.

In Cyprus, where 'live Summer never dies,
Love's native land is. There the seas, the skies,
Are blue and lucid as the looks, the air
Fervid and fragrant as the breath and hair,
Of Beauty's Queen; whose gracious godship dwells
In that dear island of delicious dells,
Mid lavish lights and languid glooms divine.
There doth she her sly dainty sceptre twine
With seabank myrtle spray, and roses sweet
And full as, when the lips of lovers meet
The first strange time, their sudden kisses be:
There doth she lightly reign: there holdeth she
Her laughing court in gleam of lemon groves:
The wanton mother of unnumber'd Loves!

What earthly creature hath Dame Venus' grace
Dower'd so divinely sweet of form and face
As that she may, unshamed in Cupid's smile,
Be sovereign lady of this lovely isle?

Sure, Venus, not so blind as some aver,
Was thy bold boy, what time, in search of her
Thou bad'st him seek, he roam'd the seas all round,
And barbarous lands beyond; since he hath found
This wonder out; whose perfect sweetness seems
The fair fulfilment of his own fond dreams:
And Kate Cornaro is the Island Queen.

II.

A Queen: a child: fair: happy: scarce nineteen!
In whose white hands her little sceptre lies,
Like a new-gather'd flowret, in surprise
At being there. To keep her what she is,
—A thing too rare for the familiar kiss
Of household loves,—wifehood and motherhood,—
Fit only to be delicately woo'd
With wooings fine and frolicksome as those
Wherewith the sweet West woos a small blush-rose,
Her husband first, and then her babe, away
Slipp'd from her sight, each on a summer day,
Ere she could miss them, into the soft shade
Of flowery graves. She doth not feel afraid
To be alone. Because she hath her toy,
Her pretty kingdom. And it is her joy
To dandle the doll-people, and be kind
And careful to it, as a child. Each wind
O' the world on her smooth eyelids lightly breathes,
As morn upon a lily whence frail wreathes

Of little dew-drops hang, easily troubled,
As such things are. The June sun's joy is doubled,
Shining thro' shadow in her golden hair.
Light-wedded, and light-widow'd, and unaware
Of any sort of sorrow doth she seem ;
Albeit the times are stormy, and do teem
With tumult round her tiny throne. Primrose,
Pert violet, hardy vetch,—no blossom blows
In March less conscious of a cloudy sky,
More sweet in sullen season. Days go by
Daintily round her. If her crown's light weight
Upon her forehead fair and delicate
Leave the least violet stain, when laid away
At close of some great summer holiday,
Her lovers kiss the sweet mark smooth and white
Ere it can pain her. She hath great delight
In little things : and of great things small care.
The people love her ; tho' the nobles are
Wayward and wild. Yet fears she not, nor shrinks
To show she fears not. 'For in truth,' she thinks,
'My Uncle Andrew, and my Uncle Mark,
Have care of me.' And, truly, dawn or dark,
These Uncles Mark and Andrew, busiest two
In Cyprus, find no lack of work to do :
Go up and down the noisy little state
Silent all day : and, when the night is late,
Write letters, which she does not care to read,
(The Ten, she knows, will ponder them with heed)

To Venice—not so far from Cyprus' shore,
But what the shadow of St. Mark goes o'er
The narrow sea to touch her island throne.

III.

She is herself a dove from Venice flown
Not so long since but what her snowy breast
Is yet scarce warm within its new-found nest.—
Whence sings she o'er the grave of Giacomo
Songs taught her by St. Mark.

Cristofero,
(He of the four stone shields which you may spy,
Thrice striped, thrice spotted with the mulberry,
In the great sunlight o'er that famous stair
Whose marble white is warm'd with rosehues, where
The crownings were once) wore the ducal horn
In Venice, on that joyous July morn
When all along the liquid streets, paved red
With rich reflections of clear crimson spread,
Or gorgeous orange gay with glowing fringe,
From bustling balconies above, to tinge
The lucid highways with new lustres, best
Befitting that day's pride, the blithe folk press'd
About St. Paul's, beneath the palace door
Of Mark Cornaro; where the Bucentor
Was waiting with the Doge; to see Queen Kate
Come smiling in her robes of marriage state

Thro' the cramm'd causeway, glimmering down between
The sloped bright-banded poles, beneath the green
Sea-weeded walls; content to catch quick gleams
Of her robe's tissue stiff with strong gold seams
From throat to foot, or mantle's sweeping shine
Of murrey satin lined with ermine fine.
Flushing the white warmth it encircled glad,
A sparkling karkanet of gems she had
About her fair throat. Such strong splendours piled
So heavily upon so slight a child
Made Venice proud; because in little things
Her greatness thus seem'd greatest.

His white wings
The galley put forth from the blue lagoon.
The mellow disk of a mild daylight moon
Was hanging wan in the warm azure air,
When the great clarions all began to blare
Farewell. And, underneath a cloudless sky
Over a calmèd sea, with minstrelsy,
The baby Queen to Cyprus sail'd. * * *

JACQUELINE,

COUNTESS OF HOLLAND AND HAINAULT.*

(1436.)

Is it the twilight, or my fading sight,
Makes all so dim around me? No, the night
Is come already. See! thro' yonder pane,
Alone in the grey air, that star again—
Which shines so wan, I used to call it mine
For its pale face; like Countess Jacqueline
Who reign'd in Brabant once . . . that's years ago.
I call'd so much mine, then: so much seem'd so!
And see, my own!—of all those things, my star
(Because God hung it there, in heaven, so far
Above the reach and want of those hard men)
Is all they have not taken from me. Then
I call it still My Star. Why not? The dust
Hath claim'd the dust: no more. And moth and rust
May rot the throne, the kingly purple fray:—
What then? Yon star saw kingdoms roll'd away

* This poem has been already printed in the "Wanderer," but is more properly placed here.

Ere mine was taken from me. It survives.
But think, beloved,—in that high life of lives,
When our souls see the suns themselves burn low
Before that Sun of Righteousness,—and know
What is, and was, before the suns were lit—
How Love is all in all . . . Look, look at it,
My Star—God's star—for being God's 'tis mine:
Had it been man's . . . no matter . . . see it shine—
The old wan beam, which I have watch'd ere now
So many a wretched night, when this poor brow
Ached 'neath the sorrows of its thorny crown.
Its crown! . . . ah, droop not, dear, those fond eyes down.
No gem in all that shatter'd coronet
Was half so precious as the tear which wet
Just now this pale sick forehead. O my own,
My husband, need was, that I should have known
Much sorrow,—more than most Queens—all know some,—
Ere, dying, I could bless thee for the home
Far dearer than the palace,—call thy tear
The costliest gem that ever sparkled here.

Enfold me, my beloved. One more kiss.
Oh, I must go! 'Twas will'd I should not miss
Life's secret, ere I left it. And now see—
My lips touch thine—thine arm encircles me—
The secret's found—God beckons—I must go.

Earth's best is given.—Heaven's turn is come to show
How much its best earth's best may yet exceed,
Lest earth's should seem the very best indeed.
So we must part a little; but not long.
I seem to see it all. My lands belong
To Philip still; but thine will be my grave,
(The only strip of land which I could save!)
Not much, but wide enough for some few flowers,
Thou'lt plant there, by and by, in later hours:
Duke Humphry, when they tell him I am dead
(And so young too) will sigh, and shake his head,
And, if his wife should chide, "Poor Jacqueline,"
He'll add, "you know she never could be mine."
And men will say, when some one speaks of me,
"Alas, it was a piteous history,
The life of that poor Countess!" For the rest
Will never know, my love, how I was blest.
Some few of my poor Zealanders, perchance,
Will keep kind memories of me; and in France
Some minstrel sing my story. Pitiless John
Will prosper still, no doubt, as he has done,
And still praise God with blood upon the Rood.
Philip will, doubtless, still be call'd "The Good."
And men will curse and kill: and the old game
Will weary out new hands: the love of fame
Will sow new sins: thou wilt not be renown'd:
And I shall lie quite quiet under ground.
My life is a torn book. But at the end

A little page, quite fair, is saved, my friend,
Where thou didst write thy name. No stain is there,
No blot,—from marge to marge, all pure—no tear;—
The last page, saved from all, and writ by thee,
Which I shall take safe up to Heaven with me.
All's not in vain, since this be so. Dost grieve?
Belovèd, I beseech thee to believe,
Altho' this be the last page of my life,
It is my heart's first, only one. Thy wife,
Poor tho' she be, O thou sole wealth of mine,
Is happier than the Countess Jacqueline!

And since my heart owns thine, say—am I not
A Queen, my chosen, tho' by all forgot?
Tho' all forsake, yet is not this thy hand?
I, a lone wanderer in a darken'd land,
I, a poor pilgrim with no staff of hope,
I, a late traveller down the evening slope,
Where any spark, the glow-worm's, by the way,
Had been a light to bless . . . have I, O say,
Not found, belovèd, in thy tender eyes,
A light more sweet than morning's? As there dies
Some day of storm all glorious in its even,
My life grows loveliest as it fades in Heaven.

This earthly house breaks up. This flesh must fade.
So many shocks of grief slow breach have made
In the poor frame. Wrongs, insults, treacheries,

Hopes broken down, and memory which sighs
In, like a night wind! Life was never meant
To bear so much in such frail tenement.
Why should we seek to patch and plaster o'er
This shatter'd roof, crusht windows, broken door,
The light already shines thro'? Let them break!

Yet would I gladly live for thy dear sake,
O my heart's first and last, if that could be!
In vain!... yet grieve not thou. I shall not see
England again, and those white cliffs; nor ever
Again those four grey towers beside the river,
And London's roaring bridges: never more
Those windows with the market-stalls before,
Where the red-kirtled market-girls went by
In the great square, beneath the great grey sky,
In Brussels: nor in Holland, night or day,
Watch those long lines of siege, and fight at bay
Among my broken army, in default
Of Gloucester's failing forces from Hainault:
Nor shall I pace again those gardens green,
With their clipt alleys, where they call'd me Queen,
In Brabant once. For all these things are gone.
But thee I shall behold, my chosen one,
Tho' we should seem whole worlds on worlds apart,
Because thou wilt be ever in my heart.
Nor shall I leave thee wholly. I shall be

An evening thought,—a morning dream to thee,—
A silence in thy life when, thro' the night,
The bell strikes, or the sun, with sinking light,
Smites all the empty windows. As there sprout
Daisies, and dimpling tufts of violets, out
Among the grass where some corpse lies asleep,
So round thy life, where I lie buried deep,
A thousand little tender thoughts shall spring,
A thousand gentle memories wind, and cling.
O, promise me, my own, before my soul
Is houseless,—let the great world turn and roll
Upon its way, unvext . . . . Its pomps, its powers!
The dust saith to the dust, . . . "the earth is ours."
I would not, if I could, be Queen again,
For all the walls of the wide world contain.
Be thou content with silence. Who would raise
A little dust and noise of human praise,
If he could see, in yonder distance dim,
The silent eye of God that watches him?
Oh! couldst thou see all that I see to-night
Upon the brinks of the great Infinite!

"Come out of her, my people, lest ye be
Partakers of her sins!" . . . . My love, but we
Our treasure where no thieves break in and steal
Have stored, I trust. Earth's weal is not our weal.
Let the world mind its business—peace or war;

Ours is elsewhere. Look, look,—my star, my star!
It grows, it glows, it spreads in light unfurl'd;—
Said I "my star?" No star—a world—God's world!
What hymns adown the jasper sea are roll'd?
Even to these sick pillows! Who enfold
White wings about me? Rest, rest, rest . . . , I come!
O love, I think that I am near my home.
Whence was that music? Was it Heaven's I heard?
"Write 'Blessèd are the dead that die i' the Lord,
Because they rest,'" . . . because their toil is o'er.
The voice of weeping shall be heard no more
In the Eternal City. Neither dying
Nor sickness, pain nor sorrow, neither crying,
For God shall wipe away all tears. Rest, rest . . . .
Thy hand, my husband,—so—upon thy breast!

THE DIRGE.

Pluck the pale sky-colour'd periwinkle,
That haunts in dewy courts, and shuns the light:
Gather dim violets and the wild eyebright,
That green old ruin'd walls doth oversprinkle:
And cull, to keep her company
In death, rue, sage, and rosemary,
And flowery thyme from the faint bed o' the bee;
For they, when Summer's o'er, make savour sweet
To cherish Winter: strew black-spikèd clove,

And mint, and marjoram, to make my love
A misty fragrance for her winding-sheet.
But pull not up red tulips, nor the rose,
For these be flaunting flowers that live i' the world's gay shows.

END OF BOOK VII.

BOOK VIII.

NARRATIVE, DRAMATIC, AND LYRICAL.

"Semper enim, ubi de spe æternitatis agitur, omnia alia contemnere non solum licet, sed etiam expedet."

Cardan Proxeneta., cxii. 666, Elzevir edit.

THE DEAD POPE.

[Possibly, one of those numerous *facezie*, common about Rome during the 'Ages of Faith.' Thence, after the Reformation, it may have found its way into Germany; being there caught up, and used as a weapon of offence by the zeal of the Reformed Pulpits; which, in the vehement and clumsy handling of it, contrived (as it would seem) to convert the fool's feather into the leaden sword. Thus it reaches us at last distorted and transformed. Hence the serio-comic, half grotesque, and altogether incongruous character of it.]

I.

THE whole day long had been wild and warm,
With a heavy forewarning of what was to come.
There had been, indeed, no such horrible storm
For many a year, men say, in Rome.
I remember it burst just after the close
Of the day when the dead Pope was laid in the Dome
Of St. Peter; taking his last repose,
To the grief of all good Christendom.

Here, before I am further gone with his story,
It is fit I should mention that, when he died,

He was of a good old age; grown hoary
In wearing the white robe, well descried
By sinner, and saint, and catechumen,
Judex gentium, mundi lumen!
Of a truth, he had sat so long in Rome,
Sat so long in Peter's chair,
Ruling the world, that he was come
To keep his power apart from care.
His hairs were few, and white
With the hoar of many years:
His eyes were filmy, and weak,
And humid, and heavy, and wan:
And all the look of the man
Was as dull, and feeble, and bleak
As the watery blunt starlight,
And thin snow, of a north March night,
When its wearied face appears
Bathed cold in a clammy grey,
Before the sluggish season clears
Earth's winter rubbish away.
Yet Winter's wine-cup cheers
The dull heart of his discontent,
While the joy of his jolly hearth endears
His home in the frosty element:
And, whatever the fretful folk may say,
This Pope was a pleasant Pope, and a gay,
For what should trouble his merriment?
There's many a text, . . . and this comes pat,

'*Dominus me lætificat*,'
And '*Filii hominum usquequo*
Gravi corde?' David, too,
Sayeth in the psalm '*In Deo*
Exultabo,' also '*meo*
In corde tu lætitiam
Dedisti.' Saith he, '*Dormiam*
In pace.' Where's the harm of that?
So (since it is better to laugh than weep)
Leaving the wolf to look after the sheep,
Whilst ever the stormy nobles raved,
And the wickedness ran over in Rome,
And sinners, grown stout, refused to be saved,
Save now and then by a martyrdom,
He smiled, and, warming his heart with wine,
Daily, gaily quaff'd the cup.
Albeit there were some who seem'd to opine,
By their sullen faces and doggerel verses,
That the cup so quaff'd was fill'd with curses,
Averring, as their spleen dictated,
That, to claim the price of its filling up
With the much-wrong'd blood of His bruisèd Vine
The dreadful unseen Vintager waited
Aware at the gate. But we all of us know
The Devil is apt to quote Scripture so:
And what harm if still, as those famous keys
Of the double world's appointed porter,
From the good man's girdle hung at their ease,

While the days grew chillier, darker, shorter,
The cellar key in the cellar door
(More nimble than each of those rusty twins)
Daily, gaily, all the more
Made music among the vaults and bins?

II.

For oh, what a paradise was there,
Set open by that kindly key!
Joyous, gentle, debonair,
The soul of every grape that dwells
By Tuscan slopes, o'er Umbrian dells,
Or else, where, oft, in azure air,
Round serene Parthenope
Witless wandering everywhere,
Drunken sings the sultry bee,
Or where, purpling tombs of kings,
Castel d' Aso's violet springs:
Montepulciano, the master-vine;
Chiánte, that comforts the Florentine;
With many a merry-hearted wine
From Dante's own delicious vale,
Whose sweetness hangs, in odours frail
Of woods and flowers, round many a tale
Of tears, along the lordly line
Of the scornful Ghibeline,
— Dante's vale, and Love's, and mine,
The pleasant vale of the Casentine!

Nor lack'd there many and many a train
Of kingly gifts,—the choicest gain
Of terraced cities over the sea:
The fiery essence of fierce Spain,
The soul of sunburnt Sicily,
The Frankish, Rhenish, vintage, all
The purple pride of Portugal,
—Whole troops of powers celestial,
The slayers of sullen Pain!
O what spirits strong and subtle!
Whether to quicken the pulses' play,
And dance the world, like a weaver's shuttle
To and fro in the dazzling loom
Where Fancy weaves her wardrobe gay;
Or soften to faintness, sweet as the fume
From silver censers swung alway
To music, making a mellow gloom,
The too intrusive light of the day.
Some that bathe the wearied brain,
And untie the knotted hair
On the pucker'd brows of Care;
Soothe from heavy eyes the stain
Of tears too long represt; make fair
With their transcendent influence
Fate's frown; or feed with nectar-food
The lips of Longing, and dispense
To the tired soul despair'd-of good:
Others that stir in the startled blood

Like tingling trumpet notes intense,
To waken the martial mood.
By the mere faint thought of it, well I wis
Such a heaven on earth were hardly amiss;
And I hold it no crime to set it in rhyme
That I think a man might pass his time
In company worse than this.

III.

But, however we pass Time, he passes still,
Passing away whatever the pastime,
And, whether we use him well or ill,
Some day he gives us the slip for the last time.
Even a Pope must finish his fill,
And follow his time, be it feast time or fast time.
As it happen'd with this same Pope. No doubt
What sleep was his after that last bout,
When he could not wake! so they laid him out.
'He is gone,' they said, 'where there's no returning.
Of the college who is the next to come?'
Then they set the bells tolling, the tapers burning,
And bore him up into Peter's dome.

IV.

And that day the whole world mourn'd with Rome.

V.

Now, after the organ's drowning note

Grew hoarse, then hush, in his golden throat,
And the latest loiterer, slacking his walk,
Cast one last glance at the catafalk,
And, passing the door, renew'd his talk
As to that last raid of Prince Colonna,
—'What villages burn'd? and what hope of indemnity?'
The Beauty from Venice (or was it Verona?)
With the nimbus of red gold hair, God bless her!
And who should be the late Pope's successor?
I say—that, as soon as the crowd was gone,
And never a face remain'd in sight,
As the tapers were brightening in chapels dim,
Just about the time of the coming on
And settling down of the ghostly light,
The sudden silence so startled him
That the dead Pope rose up.

VI.

And, first, he fumbled, and stretch'd his hand,
Feeling for the accustom'd cup;
For the taste of the wine was yet in his mouth;
And, finding it not, and vext with drouth,
Feebly, as ever, he call'd out.
For a Pope . . . what need has a Pope to shout,
Whose feeblest whisper from land to land
Is echoed, east, west, and north, and south?
But, no one coming to his command,
He rubb'd his eyes, and look'd about,

And saw, thro' a swimming mist, each face
Of his predecessors, gone to Grace
Many a century ago,
Sternly staring at him so
(From their marble seats, a mournful row)
As who should say 'Be cheerful, pray!
'Make the best of it as you may:
We are all of us here in the same sad case:
Each in his turn, we must one by one die,
Even the best of us—
God help the rest of us!
Your turn, friend, now. Make no grimace.
Consider *sic transit gloria mundi!*'

He began to grow aware of the place.

A settling strangeness more and more
Crept over him, never felt before,
As he stept down to the marble floor.
He look'd up, and down, above him, and under,
Fill'd with uncomfortable wonder.
What should persuade him that he was dead?
A horrible humming in the head?
A giddy lightness about the feet?
Last night's wine, and this night's heat!
Where were the Saints and Apostles, each
With the bird or beast that belongs to him,
Each on a cushion of cloud,—no film,

But solid and smooth like a pale-colour'd peach;
In a holy hurry the hand to reach
Down to him out of the glory dim
Where the multitudinous cherubim,
With winged heads, and wonderful eyes
Wide open, are watching in due surprise
How Heaven puts on its holiday trim
To welcome a Pope when he dies?
He could guess by the incense afloat on the air
Some service not yet so long o'er
But what he might have slept unaware,
Nor yet quite waked. What alone made him fear
Was that draperied, lighted, black thing there,
Not quite like a couch, and too much like a bier.
But anyhow 'Wherefore linger here?'
And, pushing the heavy curtain by
That flapp'd in the portal, the windy floor
Sucking its flat hem sullenly,
He pass'd out thro' the great church door.

VII.

So forth, on the vacant terrace there,
Overlooking the mighty slope
Of never-ending marble stair,
'Twixt the great church and the great square,
Stood the dead Pope.
On either side glade heap'd on glade
Of colossal colonnade,

Lost, at last, in vague and vast
Recesses of repeated shade
By those stupendous columns cast;
In midst of which, as they sang and play'd,
(Fire and sound!) the fountains made
Under the low faint starlight, laid
Not far above their splendours bright,
Fresh interchange of laughters light,
Mixt with the murmur of the might
Of royal Rome which, dim in sight,
Revelling under the redness wide
Of lamps now winking from hollow and height,
With a voice of pride on every side
Lay ready to receive the night.

VIII.

Thus, all at once, and all around,
The silence changed itself to sound
More horrible than mere silence is,
—The sound of a life no longer his.
Fresh terror seized him where he stood;
Or the fear that follow'd him, shifting ground,
Fresh onslaught made; and he rested afraid
To call or stir, like a sick owl, stray'd
From a witches' cave back again to the wood
Wherein, meanwhile, the noisy brood
Of little birds, with lusty voice,
Made free of his presence, begin to rejoice,

And he halts in alarm lest, perchance, if he cries out,
Those creatures, fit only to furnish him food,
Already by liberty render'd loquacious,
Picking up heart, and becoming audacious,
Should forthwith fall to pecking his eyes out.

IX.

Indeed, one might fairly surmise
From the noise in the streets, the shouts and cries,
That all the men and women in Rome,
From the People's Gate to St. Peter's Dome,
Tho' clad in mourning, each and all,
Were making the most of some festival :
Walking, driving, talking, striving,
Each with the rest, to do his best
To add to the tumult ; each contriving
To make, in pursuit of his special joys,
Something more than the usual noise.
Since it is not every day in the week
That one Pope dies, and another's to seek.
Such an event is a thing to treasure :
For a general mourning's a general meeting,
—A sort of general grief-competing,
Which leads, of course, to a general greeting,
(Not to mention the general drinking and eating)
That is quite a general pleasure.

X.

The universal animation,
In a word, you could hardly underrate.
So much to talk of, so much to wonder at!
The Ambassadors, first, of every nation,
Representing the whole world's tribulation,
Each of them grander than the other,
In due gradation for admiration;
How they lookt, how they spoke, what sort of speeches?
What sort of mantles, coats, collars, and breeches?
Then, the Cardinals, all in a sumptuous smother
Of piety, warm'd by the expectation
Which glow'd in the breast of each Eminent Brother
Of assuming a yet more eminent station,
—Much, he hoped, to each Eminent Brother's vexation.
And then, the Archbishops, and Bishops, and Priors,
And Abbots, and Orders of various Friars,
Treading like men that are treading on briars,
Doubtful whom, in the new race now for the State run,
They should hasten to claim as their hopeful patron.
The Nobles, too, and their Noble Families,
Prouder each than the very devil,
Yet turn'd, all at once, appallingly civil,
And masking their noble animosities
For the sake of combining further atrocities:
And, after each of the Noble Families,
Each Noble Family's faithful Following;
Who, picking their way while the crowd kept holloaing,

Stuck close to their chiefs, and proudly eyed them,
Much the same as each well-provender'd camel eyes,
In the drouthy desert, when groaning under
Their pleasing weight of public plunder,
The dainty despot boys that ride them.
A host, too, of Saints, with their special religions,
And patrons, of rival rank and station;
Which, as they pass'd, the very pigeons
On the roofs uproused in a consternation;
Being deckt in all manners of ribbons and banners,
Painted papers, and burning tapers
Enough to set in a conflagration
The world, you would think by the fume and flare of them,
And the smoky faces of those that had care of them;
All marching along with a mighty noise
Of barking dogs, and shouts, and cheers,
Brass music, and bands of singing boys,
Doing their best to split men's ears.

XL

The excitement was certainly justifiable.
The more so, if, having fairly computed
The importance, necessity, and function
Of a Pope, as divinely instituted,
You consider the fact, which is undeniable,
That, when deprived of its special pastor,
The whole of earth's flock, without compunction,
Must consider itself consign'd to disaster.

For, if the world, say,
Could go on as it should,
Doing its duty, fair and good,
Missing no crumb of its Heavenly food,
For even a week or a day
In the absence of Heaven's Representative,
Might it not be assumed from any such tentative
Process, if this each time succeeded,
That a Pope, on the whole, is hardly needed?
And that, if it should ever befal
That Heaven might be pleased, after due delay,
Its Viceroy on earth to recall,
And abolish that post, just as good and as gay
The world would go on in the usual way
Without a Pope at all?

XII.

To this Pope however, yet upon earth,
Who, tho' dead, knew what a live Pope is worth,
That sight was somewhat provoking:
Millions of men, all jostling, joking,
As merry as so many Prodigal Sons,
Having kill'd and roasted their fatted calf,
And enjoying the chance to quaff and laugh;
And yet not one of those millions
Who seem'd aware of the dead Pope there,
Or even very much to care
What had become of His Holiness,

How he must feel now, or how he might fare;
Who, all the while, was nevertheless
Sole cause of the general joyousness.
This was certainly hard to bear.
His hand he raised: no man lookt to it.
His finger: not a knee was crookt to it.
He raised his voice: no man heeded it.
He gave his blessing: no man needed it.
'Twas the merest waste of benevolence,
Since the holiday went on with or without him.
He might have been to all intents
The golden Saint stuck up on the steeple,
Who is always blessing a thankless people,
Nobody caring a button about him.
Bless, or curse, neither better nor worse
For a single word that he said,
On its wonted way a world perverse
Went onward, nobody bowing the head
Either for hope, or yet for dread.

XIII.

Then the dead Pope knew that he was dead.

XIV.

He walk'd onward—no man stopping him,
Ever onward—no lip dropping him
A *salve:* nobody making way

For the Pope to pass, as the Pope pass'd on
Thro' that rude irreverent holiday:
Till the streets behind him, one by one,
Fell off, and left him standing alone
In the mighty waste of Rome's decay.
Meanwhile, the night was coming on
Over the wide Campagna:
Hot, fierce, a blackness without form,
And in her breast she bore the storm.

I never shall forget that night!
You might tell by the stifling stillness there,
And the horrible wild-beast scent on the air,
That all things were not right.

XV.

On Mount Cavi the dark was nurst,
And the Black Monks' belfry towers above:
Then, vast, the sea of vapour burst
Where forlorn Ferretian Jove
Hears only the howlet's note accurst
Mid his fallen fanes no more divine:
And from the sea to the Apennine:
And swift across the rocky line
Where the blighted moon dropp'd first
Behind Soracte, black and broad
Up the old Triumphal Road,
From Palestrino post on Rome,

Nearer, nearer, you felt It come,
The presence of the darksome Thing!
As when, dare I say, with outstretcht wing,
By some lean Prophet summon'd fast
To punish the guilt of a stiff-neckt king,
Over the desert, black in the blast,
On Babylon, or Egypt red,
The Angel of Destruction sped.

Earth breathed not, feigning to be dead:
While the whole of Heaven overhead
Was overtaken unaware,
First here, then there, then everywhere.
Into the belly of blackness suckt,
Sank the dwindling droves of buffaloes
That spotted the extreme crimson glare:
Then the mighty darkness stronger rose,
Swallowing leagues of lurid air,
And cross'd the broken viaduct,
Flung forth in dim disorder there
Like the huge spine-bone of the skeleton
Of some dead Python, left to obstruct
The formless Night-hag's filmy path:
Thence on, by the glimmering creeks and nooks
Where the waterflats look sick and white,
Putting out quite the pallid light
Of the yellow flowers by the sulphur brooks,
That make a sullen brimstone bath

For the Nightmare's noiseless hoof:
And, leaving the quench'd-out east aloof,
The plague, from Tophet vomited,
Struck at the west, and rushing came
Right against the last red flame,
Where in cinders, now, the day,
Self-condemn'd to darkness, lay
With all his sins upon his head
Burning on a fiery bed,
Helpless, hopeless, overthrown.

XVI.

Now, to all the world it is well known
How the Devil rides the wind by night:
Doing all the harm he can
In the absence of Heaven's light
To the world's well-order'd plan,
And with murrain, mildew, blight,
Or thunder blue, or hailstone white,
Marring the thrift of the honest man,
Which much doth move his spite.

XVII.

Certainly, he was out that night,
What time the fearful storm began.
For lo! on a sudden, left and right,
The heaven was gash'd from sky to sky,

Seam'd across, and sunder'd quite,
By a swift, snaky, fork-tongued flash
Of brightness intolerably bright;
As, ever, the angry Cherub, vow'd
To vengeance, fast thro' plunging cloud
Wielding wide his withering lash,
That wild horseman now pursued:
Who lurk'd, his vengeance to elude,
In deep unprobèd darkness still.

. . .

Forthwith, the wounded night 'gan spill
Great drops: then fierce—crash crusht on crash—
As it grieved beneath each burning gash,
The darkness bellow'd; and outsprang
Wild on the plain, whilst yet it rang
With thunder, the infernal steed,
And dash'd onward at full speed,
Blind with pain, with streaming mane,
And snorting nostril on the strain,
Where, dasht from off his flanks, the rain
Thro' all the desolate abyss
Of darkness, now began to hiss.

XVIII.

And here (for this story is scatter'd about
The world in dozens of different shapes)
One writes . . . . Some Lutheran lean, I doubt,
Who, nameless, thus from shame escapes.

—Lies thrive and flourish by the score:
Take this for what 'tis worth, no more :—

"Out leaping from that riven rack
Of cloud, where night was boiling black,
And so escaping, as God will'd,
While, for a time, the storm was still'd,
Satan beheld the face he knew,
Amoris actus impetu.
And to the Shepherd gone astray
Grimly the black goats' Goatherd said
'Service for service! on their way
To me full many hast thou sped:
And, since it is a stormy night,
Lest thou shouldst lose thine own way quite,
(For how shouldst thou the right way know
Who seek'st it out the first time now?)
Content am I thy guide to be.
Nor marvel that 'tis known to me,
The way to Heaven. For who but I
Makes half the ways there, that men try?
Moreover, there's no jolly sin
Which those I lead may not take in,
If they themselves can pass the gate
Whereat, of course, we separate.
For all the members of my flock
Come furnisht with Indulgences
In proper form—a goodly stock!

'Tis but to pick and chuse from these.
Paid for they are; and, *signo hoc*,
Well paid, if Peter will but please
That wicket to unlock.' "

XIX.

A spiteful fable. Best to own
The truth can ne'er by us be known.
But alas! for any poor ghost of a Pope
In such a night to be doom'd to grope,
Blind beneath the hideous cope
Of those black skies without a star,
For the way to where the Blessèd are!
And, if the Evil One, himself,
Was his conductor thro' the dark;
Or, if, dislodged from its sky-shelf
Some cloud was made his midnight bark;
Or if the branding bolt, that rent
The skies asunder, hew'd for him
Thro' that disfeatured firmament,
Beyond the utmost echoing brim
Of thunder-brewage, and the black
Unblissful night, some shining track
Up to the Sapphire Throne, where throng
The Voices crying 'Lord, how long?'
While the great years are onward roll'd
With moans and mutterings manifold;
I know not, for it was not told.

XX.

It would seem, however, all texts agree
(And this should suffice us at anyrate)
In assuming for certain that, early or late,
The dead Pope got to the Golden Gate
Where the mitred Apostle sits with the key,
—Peter, whose heir upon earth was he.
And further than this to speculate
I, for one, do not feel justified.
Tho' a fact there is, I am bound to state:
A renegade Monk avers he descried
In a vision that very night,
When the storm was spending its fiercest hate
(—And what he saw, so much the sight
Impress'd him, he wrote as soon as he woke:
—Was it a dream, or a wicked joke?)
What pass'd before That Gate.

XXI.

Now, since, after the fashion then in vogue,
He wrote it in form of a dialogue,
Not averring, as he did, the dream to be true,
In all else, as he wrote it, I write it for you:

VOICE OUTSIDE THE GATE.

"Peter, Peter, open the Gate!

VOICE WITHIN.

I know thee not. Thou knockest late.

FIRST VOICE.

Late! yet, Peter, look, and see
Who calleth.

SECOND VOICE.

Nay, I know not thee.
What art thou?

FIRST VOICE.

Peter, Peter, ope
The Gate!

SECOND VOICE.

What art thou?

FIRST VOICE.

The dead Pope.

SECOND VOICE.

The Pope? what is it?

FIRST VOICE.

In men's eye
Thy successor, late, was I.
What was thine was given to me.

SECOND VOICE.

Martyrdom and misery?

FIRST VOICE.

Nay, but power to bind and loose.
In thy name have I burn'd Jews
And heretics, and all the brood
Of unbelief . . .

VOICES FAR WITHIN.

Avenge our blood,
Lord!

FIRST VOICE.

And in thy name have blest
Kings and Emperors; confest
Earth's Spiritual Head, while there
I sat ruling in thy chair.

VOICES FAR WITHIN.

Woe! because the kings of earth
Were with her in her wicked mirth!

FIRST VOICE.

In thy name, and for thy cause,
I made peace and war, set laws
To lawgivers . . .

VOICES FAR WITHIN.

And all nations
Drunk with the abominations
Of her witchcraft!

FIRST VOICE.

In thy name,
And for thy cause, to sword and flame
I gave sinners; and to those
That fear'd the friends, and fought the foes,
Of him from all mankind selected
To keep thy name and cause respected,
Riches and rewards I gave,
And the joy beyond the grave.

VOICES FAR WITHIN.

Souls of men, too, chaffering lies,
Did she make her merchandise.

FIRST VOICE.

By all means have I upheld
Thy patrimony—nay, 'tis swell'd.

VOICES FAR WITHIN.

For herself she glorified
In the riches of her pride.

FIRST VOICE.

Wherefore, Peter, ope the Gate!
If my knocking now be late,
Little time, in truth, had I
—I, the Pope, who stand and cry!
For other cares than those that came
Upon me, in thy cause and name,
Holding up the heavy keys
Of Heaven, and Hell.

SECOND VOICE.

If so, if these
Thou hast in keeping, wherefore me
Callest thou? Thou hast the key.
Truly thou hast waited late!
Open, then, thyself, The Gate."

And here the Monk breaks off, to state,
With befitting reflections by the way,
With what great joy the Pope, no doubt,
Soon as he heard the stern voice say
Those words, began to search about
Among his garments, for the key;
Which, strange to say, 'twould seem that he
Had not bethought him of before.
And how that joy, from more to more,
Wax'd most (the historian of his dream
Observes, as he resumes the theme)

"When, after search grown desperate,
A key he found,—just as his need
Seem'd at the worst,—a key, indeed!
But, ah vain hope! for, however the Pope
Tried the key in the fasten'd Gate,
Turning it ever with might and main
This way, that way, every way at last,
Forwards—backwards—round again—
Till his joy is turn'd to sheer dismay at last,
And his failing force will no longer cope
With the stubborn Gate,—it declines to ope.
A key, indeed! but not, alas,
THE KEY."

Who shall say *what* key it was?
The Monk, who here, I must believe,
Is laughing at us in his sleeve,
(Like any vulgar story-teller,
Fabling forms to vent his spleen)
Surmises that it must have been
The key of the Pope's own cellar.

THOMAS MÜNTZER TO MARTIN LUTHER.

(FROM PRISON.)

I KNOW not if what now my spirit doth spend
This tortur'd frame's last strength in sore endeavour
To write to thee will reach thee, Luther, ever.
For I, whose crime is to have been man's friend,
No friend can claim, whose friendship's faith I may
Trust these, my life's last words, to thee to send,
After my death, which thou dost urge, men say.
I know not, Luther, if what's writ to-night
Be for thy reading, or for any man's.
'Tis as God wills. But, since His own eye scans,
And answers, in my heart, what now I write,
Still I write on, while He withholds the end,
And, setting bare my spirit in God's sight,
I summon thine to witness.
'Twere in vain
To urge the old sad difference o'er again.
Doom'd to an imminent death,—a dreadful one
In all save this,—that death, whate'er the shape

God gives it, is the event of life alone
Graced with God's last great gift to man,—escape
From men's tormenting,—I desire not now
To argue a long-talk'd theology.
How much mere knowledge with mere life may grow
Concerns not one that, being about to die,
Approaches Truth by no such process slow.
Too near death's hour of certainty am I.
But O the pity! Had we two been one!
As once we might have been: who cannot be,
Henceforth, united, till by God's clear throne
We stand together, with Heaven's eyes to see
What Earth's miss'd sadly: each, Man's champion,
And, therefore, God's! We, in this dark, abused
By the false glare of midnight watchfires, seen
Across a warring world, where all's confused,
Mistook for foes each other, who, I ween,
Are soldiers of the self-same King. And so
We fought, and, struck by thee, I fall. Each blow
Of thine, which I must pardon and deplore,
A friend's mistake! tho' fatal, Luther, more
Than if a foe had dealt it. O why, why
This woeful haste, that mars so much? See here
The sad result. For, Luther, while I die,
What ominous, incongruous faces leer
Beside thine own with laughing lip and eye?
What strange unholy helpmates share with thee
The sad bad joy of this false victory

O'er me and man? Error on error! see,
Beneath the same soil'd banner at thy side,
Hand clasping hand, grim Saxon George allied
With him of Hesse! sworn foes erewhile, tho' now
George, who would think he did God service good
Could he but rend thee limb from limb, as thou
Bids't him rend me, red with thy brother's blood,
Thy right hand holds: who clasps the other? he,
The Landgrave, who hates him, as both hate me.
And thou, the while, art hugging each red hand!
What glues so fast the fratricidal Three
Together thus? And what of such a band
The shameful central link makes Luther be?
My blood. O shame, shame, shame, my brother, shame!
Is it not sad that God such things should see,
And thou the cause? O worst disgrace of all!
That, when God asks 'Who did this?' men must name
Their noblest, and the blame of such deeds fall
On him whose scorn should brand them with the blame
Such deeds deserve. Error beyond recall!
Yet, think, think, Luther, and be sad 'tis so.

Desirest thou man's good? I wot thou dost.
But self hath film'd thy spirit's eagle eye.
Hear him not, heed him not, since cry he must,
The flattering fiend, that in thy heart doth cry!
I hear the plausible serpent tempting Dust
To mimic God! and thou dost taste his lie,

And in the sweetness of it take delight,
Murmuring 'Man's good? for what else have I striven,
Toil'd, dared, done battle, conquer'd? Man's good, ay!
But man's good, by my gift, to mankind given,
Not man's good, man's hereditary right.'
Hath it not oft thus whisper'd thee? and thou
Hast listen'd till it seem'd God's voice! By night,
When thoughts speak loud that scarce dare whisper low
By daylight,—when the Tempter saith his say,
And *will* be answer'd,—doubtless to me, too,
Would some such wandering whisper steal its way
At times, from the abyss. I thank God, who
Gave my soul strength to answer stoutly Nay,
And foil Pride's prelate-devil of his prey!

Consider, Luther . . . 'tis Paul speaks, not I . . .
How all are members of the Body of Christ:
Where were the hearing, were the body all eye?
Were it all ear, in what would sight exist?
Were all one member, where the body then?
Many the members, tho' the body is one:
One Spirit of God in many lives of men:
Can the eye say to the hand 'Need have I none
Of thee'? or can the head say to the feet
'I need ye not'? Nay, rather they which be
The body's feeblest members most complete
The body's being: rather those that we
Esteem least comely claim the comeliest care,

Those least in honour honour most entreat:
Since to the body these most needful are:
The weaker parts chief cherishing demand:
The limbs crave clothing—not the head, the hand.

What gleam'd on Corinth, in the dawn of Faith,
Is Luther blind to, in Faith's noonday blaze?
To thee, Apostle, still the Poor Man saith
The selfsame word that in the old proud days
Paul to the rich Corinthians cried. They heard,
Believed, obey'd, and blest the Preacher's word.

To Corinth God one preacher sent: to thee
A thousand preachers cry aloud, my brother.
The fetter'd foot rebukes the hand that's free.
Should not we members cherish one another?
For if one member suffereth pain or wrong
All suffer with it, and the whole frame ails:
Since each to each the bodily parts belong,
And none without his fellow's help avails
The body's use. But is it so with us?
The Rich oppress the Poor: the Strong the Weak:
The hand lops off the foot. The body, thus
Self-mutilated, suffers, and doth shriek:
But the ear hears not what the tongue doth cry,
And the hand helps not, and Shame shuts the eye!

I sought to heal this sickness into health:
To mitigate, not magnify, man's wrong:

For Want win justice, and give worth to Wealth :
To free the Weak, not to enslave the Strong :
Mid gifts unequal, mid unequal powers,
Secure the equal happiness of all :
Maintain God's law in this mad world of ours :
Replace the force of mere material thrall
By force of love ; the old empiry of Might,
Which is imposed upon unwilling hate,
By the serene sweet sovereignties of Right,
That are accepted, and secured i' the state
Of man's free spirit, by the loyal love
Of what the soul perceives to be Above.

I sought to attain this by no violent aids :
I preach'd not Justice from the cannon's mouth
In humble hearts, not over crownèd heads,
I claim'd dominion, and 'twas granted. Youth,
Hope's dawn-star trembling in his tear-lit eyes ;
Old Age, the twilight of his toilful day
Suffused with solemn joy—like evening skies
That promise watchful shepherds a fair morn—
Brightening his grave, calm, satisfied regard ;
And Womanhood—the maiden in her May,
The care-worn wife, with hungry eyes, grown hard
From grieving without hope—pale mothers, worn
With nursing breadless babes ; the wan array
Of this world's weary hearts ;—all these, no scorn
Could sneer to shame, no cares could keep away,

No want withhold, from Love's new-found domain.
Love shew'd his face, and was forthwith beloved!
No drop of blood was shed, no victim slain,
For love of all in each loved spirit moved,
And this man's pleasure was not that man's pain;
But in Mulhausen God saw, and approved,
The bloodless triumph that bequeath'd no stain
To Love's least soldier. And there rose on earth,
For Heavenly augury of human gain,
A glorious Form of innocent beauty and mirth,
—A little State like One large Family:
All members of one body at one birth:
And all were lowly, because all were high:
None poor: none idle: tyrant none, nor thrall:
Strong labour for the strong: light for the weak:
Labour for all: and food for all: for all
Hope that makes strong, and Reverence that makes meek,
Conscience that governs, Justice that allies,
Love that obeys, and Faith that fortifies.

And so, it grew, and grew: and so, I deem'd
It might grow yet—Earth's fruit of Heavenly seed!
But no! the vulture swoop'd, the eagle scream'd,
The roused hawk hunger'd, and the dove must bleed!
The banded anarchs of a brutal time
Hated us strongly, and were strong: their greed
Was made earth's god: their lust earth's law sublime:
We loved, and we were weak: that was our crime.

And where was Luther then? From town to town
Chasing grey-headed Carlstadt, his old friend:
Denouncing, persecuting, hunting down,
Down, to a noble life's disastrous end,
The man, to whom, in God's attesting name,
His solemn faith was pledged not long before:
The man he loathed because he could not tame
That old man's fearless spirit any more
To crouch to his! Or to obedience old
Scolding Melanchthon's meeker nature back.
Ah, dear Melanchthon, loved, tho' lost! How, fold
On fold, the blurr'd Past lifts its vapour black,
To let emerge those melancholy eyes
Once more, which still my wrong'd heart loves! Alack,
Love is not always just, nor Memory wise.
May truer friends forgive me, that I cease,
A moment even, to list to their loud woes!
The thought of thee o'er all things breathes sad peace:
And, for a while, in sorrowful repose
The world's vast wail is husht, to let me hear
The old sweet fluteplaying . . . . so faint, so clear!
Melanchthon, never play that flute again!

Back, heart, to Luther! Where was Luther then?
Maligning Müntzer to the magistrate:
The rich man's friend, the friendless people's foe:
With frenzied rail, rebuking hope: elate
To lift the high-born, lay the low-born low:

Now this Elector, now that Landgrave, praising:
Thro' all Thuringia preaching scorn and strife:
In every Saxon burg crusaders raising
Against the accursèd Anabaptist's life!

Even then, the untaught patient peasant clung
To hope in justice from an unjust power.
Sharp was the cry which misery from him wrung,
But scant his asking even in that last hour.
He ask'd for leave to labour and to live,
—A free man's life and labour, not a beast's:
To honest Want what honest Wealth may give,
Wages for work: Christ's charity from Priests:
Justice from Law: and man's humanity
From Human Power. His prayer was humbly urged:
Scorn was the guerdon, outrage the reply.
With hoot and howl, the importunate wretch was scourged
From field to forest, and from moor to fen.
Then, then at last, lash'd, famisht, to its lair,
The frenzied People, raving, rent its den:
Then savageries of nature seethed and surged
In manly breasts unmann'd by mad despair:
Brute hardship brutalised the hearts of men:
And beasts of burden changed to wild beasts then.

Ay! then, indeed, another voice was heard:
Not mine: and stormy listeners, lured by hate,

Welcom'd the preacher of a wilder word,
With hearts whose love's last cry was strangled late.
Like rainless lightning thro' a wildwood ran
Stork's fiery utterance: where it dropp'd, it burn'd:
And all was flame. For each wrong'd heart of man
Caught fire and flared; and, flaring, backward turn'd
Before the rushing wind of ruinous Wrath,
And pour'd that glare upon a blighted Past:
And each beheld, what barr'd the backward path,
Some mighty image of a monstrous wrong
Whereon the red revengeful light was cast.
This saw his son's back bleed beneath the thong:
That other his dishonour'd bride beheld,
Or ravisht daughter: one, the hunter's throng
Trampling his thrifty field: another yell'd
'In Leipheim bleach my boys' unburied bones!'
One saw his brother burning at the pyre:
One caught from bloody racks a comrade's groans:
One saw his father on the cross expire.
Then burst the dreadful shout, the dooming word,
And in the hand of Vengeance flash'd the sword.

And peace was pass'd away. To me, to all,
No choice survived, but action, and a cause
To fight for: man's oppressor, or his thrall:
The makers, or the breakers, of bad laws.
My choice was fixt, my part imposed: in me
No pause disloyal to the past allow'd.

Albeit strife's end I could not fail to see :
The certain slaughter of an unskill'd crowd,
Disaster, disappointment, death : fit ends
To false beginnings—war to vengeance vow'd,
And valour shamed by violent deeds. My friends
To fancied victory, fool'd, with blindfold eyes,
Went forth : unblinded I, to sacrifice.

Yet, when the Armies of the Poor display'd
The Wheel of Fortune on their ensigns borne,
Which, in the turning of her hoodwink'd head,
Turns all things upside down with captious scorn,
'Not Chance, but Hope, be our device!' I said,
'For godless Fortune's gifts leave Faith forlorn,
But God's gift Hope stays fast when these be fled.'
And on the People's flag I blazon'd then
Heaven's rainy bow, first rear'd o'er rescued men.

Ay! tho' that banner hath been beaten down,
That symbol trampled out in streams of blood,
While this contented world without a frown
Is praising faithless peace in festal mood,
Tho' all the friends for whom I hoped are slain
Like shambled sheep, and tho' myself must die
In some few hours, that hope I still retain :
Not with the same wild moment's flashing joy
That seized my soul when, in war's desperate hour,
I stood on the hill top, and saw beneath

The all-surrounding hosts of hostile Power,
And mine own helpless sheep, ordain'd to death,
A faint and weary flock, which to devour,
The herded wolves, hoarse barking, bared sharp teeth;
While high in heaven, athwart the thunder-shower,
Even as I lifted up my voice, and cried
To God, with stretch'd expostulating hand,
Sprang forth the sudden rainbow, basing wide
O'er battle strewn about the lower land,
Storm strewn in heaven, all its aery pride,
Triumphant on the everlasting hills!
Not thus I hope. No gleam of promise thus
Visits this hour, which Heaven with darkness fills.
For men must wait. God deigns not to discuss
With our impatient and o'erweening wills
His times, and ways of working out thro' us
Heaven's slow but sure redress of human ills.
When Christ was in the garden captived, they
That, till that hour, had talk'd and walk'd beside Him,
Hoping in Him, lost hope, and fled away,
And he that knew Him best ere dawn denied Him.
What wonder? All seem'd lost, i' the very eve
Of an immortal victory. In man's sight,
All *was* lost. What disciple could believe
Love's triumph in Life's failure, that sad night?
But God makes light what men make dark: His fire
He frees where fall our ashes. And, because
I feel God's power, still doth my spirit aspire:

Not fearing, even now, that unjust laws
By unjust force maintain'd, rack, stake, or cord,
The sign'd conventions of convenient Wrong,
The tyrant's sceptre, or the hireling's sword,
The servile pulpit, timorous to the strong,
To the weak truculent, or custom tough,
Can crush man's rights forever, or prolong
Man's pain an hour, whene'er God cries 'Enough!'
And for this reason, and because I think
I never cared about myself since first
I cared for man,—from whom I dare not shrink,
Not even tho' he forsake himself,—nor aught
Hath Fancy nourisht, or Ambition nurst,
That was not featured in the womb of thought
By Hope's keen contemplation of man's face;
Because I cared not ever, care not now,
Which runner's foot be fleetest in the race,
Who, at the goal, assumes to grace his brow
The garland won, who takes the upper place,
Chief at the board, when festal wine-cups flow,
So long as, at the last, the goal be gain'd,
The garland got, the general table spread;
—Whoe'er the man by whom man's aim attain'd,
Joy crowns my heart, if victory crown his head!
Luther, because 'twas thus—'*tis* thus—with me,
And because, gazing with intensest gaze
Round each lost field where my life's ruins be,
A gleam of hope for man, in these dark days,

—(His last, perchance, for centuries long!—) I see,
Or seem to see, i' the spirit-power which stays,
Tho' stain'd—like sunrise o'er a stormy sea
Pour'd from a clouded crag with struggling rays—
On thy firm forehead's pride,—I write to thee.
Love mankind, Luther, if thou lovest not me!
For thou, great Spirit, art full-arm'd! a soul
Clothed with strong thunder by the hand of God:
Ardent to combat, potent to control:
Gabriel's spear, John's Angel's measuring-rod,
The Cherub's flaming sword, and Michael's shield,
Were given to thee—to conquer, not to yield.

Yield not the Devil his recaptured prey!
Conquer for all mankind! Complete thy task!
The People, thou wast sent to save and sway,
Die in the Desert: thristy lips, that ask
In vain for water! perishing feet that stray
Farther and farther from the Promist Land,
And sink 'neath weary loads along the way!
Mock not man's thirst with driblets pour'd i' the sand
From the scant leavings of Wealth's well-drain'd flask.
Cleave thou the stubborn stone with stern command.
Smite these rich rocks! The rod is in thy hand.

Thou canst. But if thou wilt not . . .
Hark! give ear
To this sad prophecy of woes to be,

A dying voice to night-winds, moaning here,
Delivers, charging them to bear to thee
The burthen of Time's melancholy song:
The Church thou buildest, scorning first to free
Life's cumber'd field for Love's foundations, long
Shall be, herself, the slave of Power: and she,
Wed to the World, not Christ, the unchristian wrong
Of worldly Force with worldly Fraud shall share,
And so wax weak by scheming to be strong;
Till there shall be on earth a sight to scare
Earth's holiest hope from human hearts away:
A Priesthood, purchased for complacent prayer,
Leagued with Earth's Pomps, for profit and for pay,
Against Heaven's Love: praisers of things that are,
Scorners of good that's not: cleaving to clay,
Strangling the spirit; purblind, unaware!
Contracting, not enlarging, day by day,
The charities of Christ, with surly care:
Till man's indignant heart shall turn away,
And chuse the champions of its faith elsewhere.
And champions shall it find. Dread champions, they!
The impatient offspring of prolong'd despair:
A prayerless, pitiless, imperious brood,
Whose battle-cry shall be a cry for blood.

It may come soon, come late, come once for all,
Achieve its task, and pass, content, away,
That Hour of Fate, which God to life shall call:

It may come many times, and miss its prey,
And pass, dissatisfied, to come again,
More grimly arm'd with greed of greater sway,
To rescue from more wretchedness more men:
I cannot tell. For unseen hands delay
The coming of what oft seems close in ken,
And, contrary, the moment, when we say
'Twill never come!' comes on us even then.
I cannot tell the coming of that day,
If near or far, or how 'twill be, or when:
But come it will, and do its work it must,
So sure as moves God's spirit in man's dust.

Men call me Prophet. And thou, too, in scorn.
Prophet I am. For grief hath made me wise.
The night's lone watchman feels far off the dawn,
And, till redress'd, all wrongs are prophecies.
This is no tortured fool's despairing curse,
No maniac menace from a murder'd man.
Luther, consider—ere man's need be worse,
If thou wilt help it, as none other can.
I claim not justice now, I do beseech
Compassion, for the Poor. To thee, to all,
I would, indeed, my dying cry might reach:
—Place for the People's Cause! in which I fall.

My sands run out. What else my soul would say
Must be said shortly. And these fingers write

But ill the struggling thoughts that force their way
Thro' tortured nerves, and speak in pain's despite.
Judge if 'tis pity for myself I crave.
Luther, one woman lives that loves me: one
Whose life I'd die ten thousand deaths to save:
I have no friends, and therefore she hath none,
Save God: I cannot shield her, from the grave
To which men doom me: worse than all alone
I leave her, compass'd with a world of foes!
That is the wife whose steps with mine have gone
Faithful thro' life, tho' led from woes to woes.
I have not breathed one prayer, not made one moan
To thee for her, that's as myself, Heaven knows!
Much less for this least self, that's soon to die;
Tho' it hath suffer'd somewhat. Thrice they bound
This body to their rack. Thou wast not by.
Thy friends were. Each dictated some fresh wound,
And all applauded. Let that pass. For man,
Not for myself, I end, as I began,
This letter, and this life.
With failing force,
But not with fainting faith, I lift the cry
That speeds my spirit on its sunward course
Beyond Death's night. And, as I lived, I die,
Man's friend; imploring—tho' it be in vain—
From thee, from all—man's pity for man's pain!

ADOLPHUS, DUKE OF GUELDERS.

(FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURIES.)

ADOLPHUS, Duke of Guelders, having died,
Was laid in pomp for men to see. Priests vied
With soldiers, which the most should honour him.
Borne on broad shoulders through the streets, with hymn
And martial music, the dead Duke in state
Reach'd Tournay. There they laid him in the great
Cathedral, where perpetual twilight dwells,
Misty with scents from silver thuribles;
Since it seems fitting that, where dead kings sleep,
The sacred air, by pious aids, should keep
A certain indistinctness faint and fine,
To awe the vulgar mind, and with divine
Solemnities of silence, and soft glooms,
Inspire due reverence around royal tombs.
So, in the great Cathedral, grand, he lay.

The Duke had gain'd his Dukedom in this way:
Once, on a winter night, . . . these things were written
Four centuries ago, when men, frost-bitten,
Blew on their nails, and curst, to warm their blood,
The times, the taxes, and what else they could, . . .

A hungry, bleak night sky, with frosty fires
Hung hard, and clipt with cold the chilly spires,
Bent, for some hateful purpose of its own,
To keep sharp watch upon the little town,
Which huddled in its shadow, as if there
'Twas safest, trying to look unaware;
Earth gave it no assistance, and small cheer,
'Neath that sharp sky, resolved to interfere
For its affliction, but lockt up her hand,
Stared fiercely on man's need, and his command
Rejected, cold as kindness when it cools,
Or charity in some men's souls. The pools
And water-courses had become dead streaks
Of steely ice. The rushes in the creeks
Stood stiff as iron spikes. The sleety breeze,
Itself, had died for lack of aught to tease
On the gaunt oaks, or pine-trees numb'd and stark.
All fires were out, and every casement dark
Along the flinty streets. A famisht mouse,
Going his rounds in some old dismal house,
Disconsolate (for since the last new tax
The mice began to gnaw each other's backs),
Seem'd the sole creature stirring; save, perchance,
With steel glove slowly freezing to his lance,
A sullen watchman, half asleep, who stept
About the turret where the old Duke slept.

The young Duke, whom a waking thought, not new,

Had held from sleeping, the last night or two,
Consider'd he should sleep the better there,
Provided that the old Duke slept elsewhere.
Therefore, (about four hundred years ago,
This point was settled by the young Duke so,)
Adolphus—the last Duke of Egmont's race
Who reign'd in Guelders, after whom the place
Lapsed into Burgundian line—put on
His surcoat, buckled fast his habergeon,
Went clinking up that turret stairway, came
To the turret chamber, whose dim taper flame
The gust that enter'd with him soon smote dead,
And found his father, sleeping in his bed
As sound as, just four hundred years ago,
Good Dukes and Kings were wont to sleep, you know.

A meagre moon, malignant as could be,
Meanwhile made stealthy light enough to see
The way by to the bedside, and put out
A hand, too eager long to grope about
For what it sought. A moment after that,
The old Duke, wide awake and shuddering, sat
Stark upright in the moon; his thin grey hair
Pluckt out by handfuls; and that stony stare,
The seal which terror fixes on surprise,
Widening within the white and filmy eyes
With which the ghastly father gazed upon
Strange meanings in the grim face of the son.

The young Duke haled the old Duke by the hair
Thus, in his nightgear, down the turret stair;
And made him trot, barefooted, on before
Himself, who rode a horseback, thro' the frore
And aching midnight, over frozen wold,
And icy meer. (That winter, you might hold
A hundred fairs, and roast a hundred sheep,
If you could find them, on the ice, so deep
The frost had fixt his floors on driven piles.)
From Grave to Buren, five and twenty miles,
The young Duke hunted thro' the hollow night
The old Duke, like a phantom, flitting white
Thro' darkness into darkness, and the den
Where great men falling are forgot by men.
There in a dungeon, where newts dwell, beneath
The tower of Buren Castle, until death
Took him, he linger'd very miserably;
Some say for months; some, years. Tho' Burgundy
Summon'd both son and father to appear
Before him, ere the end of that same year,
And sought to settle, after mild rebuke,
Some sort of compromise between the Duke
And the Duke's father. But it fail'd.
This way
The Duke had gain'd his Dukedom.
At Tournay,
Afterwards, in the foray on that town,
He fell; and, being a man of much renown,

And very noble, with befitting state,
Was royally interr'd within the great
Cathedral. There, with work of costly stones
And curious craft, above his ducal bones
They builded a fair tomb. And over him
A hundred priests chanted the holy hymn.
Which being ended, . . . "Our archbishop" (says
A chronicler, writing about those days)
"Held a most sweet discourse." . . . . And so, the psalm
And silver organ ceasing, in his calm
And costly tomb they left him ; with his face,
Turn'd ever upward to the altar-place,
Smiling in marble from the shrine below.

These things were done four hundred years ago,
Adolphus, Duke of Guelders, in this way
First having gain'd his Dukedom, as I say.
After which time, the great Duke Charles the Bold
Laid hold on Guelders, and kept fast his hold.
Times change : and with the times too change the men.
A hundred years have roll'd away since then.
I mean, since "Our archbishop" sweetly preach'd
His sermon on the dead Duke, unimpeach'd
Of flattery in the fluent phrase that just
Tinkled the tender moral o'er the dust
Of greatness, and with flowers of Latin strew'd,
To edify a reverent multitude,
The musty surface of the faded theme

"All flesh is grass: man's days are but a dream."
A bad dream, surely, sometimes: waking yet
Too late deferr'd! Such honours to upset,
Such wrongs to right, such far truths to attain,
Time, tho' he toils along the road amain,
Is still behindhand; never quite gets thro'
The long arrears of work he finds to do.
You call Time swift? it costs him centuries
To move the least of human miseries
Out of the path he treads. You call Time strong?
He does not dare to smite an obvious wrong
Aside, until 'tis worn too weak to stand
The faint dull pressure of his feeble hand.
The crazy wrong, and yet how safe it thrives!
The little lie, and yet how long it lives!
Meanwhile, I say, a hundred years have roll'd
O'er the Duke's memory.

Now, again behold!

Late gleams of dwindled daylight, glad to go:
A sullen autumn evening, scowling low
On Tournay: a fierce sunset, dying down
In clots of crimson fire, reminds a town
Of starving, stormy people, how the glare
Sunk into eyes of agonised despair,
When placid pastors of the flock of Christ
Had finish'd roasting their last Calvinist.
A hot and lurid night is steaming up,

Like a foul film out of some witch's cup,
That swarms with devils spawn'd from her damn'd charms.
For the red light of burning burgs and farms
Oozes all round, beneath the lock'd black lids
Of heaven. Something on the air forbids
A creature to feel happy, or at rest.
The night is cursed, and carries in her breast
A guilty conscience. Strange, too! since of late
The Church is busy, putting all things straight,
And taking comfortable care to keep
The fold snug, and all prowlers from the sheep.
To which good end, upon this self-same night,
A much dismay'd Town Council has thought right
To set a Guard of Terror round about
The great Cathedral; fearing lest a rout
Of these misguided creatures, prone to sin,
As lately proven, should break rudely in
There, where Adolphus, Duke of Guelders, and
Other dead dukes, by whom this happy land
Was once kept quiet in good times gone by,
With saints and bishops sleeping quietly,
Enjoy at last the slumber of the just;
In marble; mixing not their noble dust
With common clay of the inferior dead.
Therefore you hear, with moody measured tread,
This Guard of Terror going its grim watch,
Thro' ominous silence. Scarce sufficient match,
However, even for a hundred lean

Starved wretches, lasht to madness, having seen
Somewhat too long, or too unworthily look'd
Upon, their vile belongings being cook'd
To suit each priestly palate. . . . If to-night
Those mad dogs slip the muzzle, 'ware their bite!

And so, perchance, the thankless people thought:
For, as the night wore off, a much-distraught
And murmurous crowd came thronging wild to where,
I' the market-place, each stifled thoroughfare
Disgorges its pent populace about
The great Cathedral.
Suddenly, a shout,
As tho' Hell's brood had broken loose, rock'd all
Heaven's black roof dismal and funereal.
As when a spark is dropt into a train
Of nitre, swiftly ran from brain to brain
A single fiery purpose, and at last
Exploded, roaring down the vague and vast
Heart of the shaken city. Then a swell
Of wrathful faces, irresistible,
Sweeps to the great Cathedral doors; disarms
The Guard; roars up the hollow nave; and swarms
Thro' aisle and chancel, fast as locusts sent
Thro' Egypt's chambers thick and pestilent.

There, such a sight was seen, as, now and then,
When half a world goes mad, makes sober men

In after years, who comfortably sit
In easy chairs to weigh and ponder it,
Revise the various theories of mankind,
Puzzling both others and themselves, to find
New reasons for unreasonable old wrongs.

Yells, howlings, cursings; grim tumultuous throngs;
The metamorphoses of mad despair:
Men with wolves' faces, women with fierce hair
And frenzied eyes, turn'd furies: over all
The torchlight tossing in perpetual
Pulsation of tremendous glare or gloom.
They climb, they cling from altar-piece and tomb;
Whilst pickaxe, crowbar, pitchfork, billet, each
Chance weapon caught within the reckless reach
Of those whose single will a thousand means
Subserve to (terrible, wild kings and queens
Whose sole dominions are despairs), thro' all
The marble monuments majestical
Go crashing. Basalt, lapis, syenite,
Porphyry, and pediment, in splinters bright,
Tumbled with claps of thunder, clattering
Roll down the dark. The surly sinners sing
A horrible black santis, so to cheer
The work in hand. And evermore you hear
A shout of awful joy, as down goes some
Three-hundred-years-old treasure. Crowded, come
To glut the greatening bonfire, chalices

Of gold and silver, copes and cibories,
Stain'd altar-cloths, spoil'd pictures, ornaments,
Statues, and broken organ tubes and vents,
The spoils of generations all destroy'd
In one wild moment! Possibly grown cloy'd
And languid, then a lean iconoclast,
Drooping a sullen eyelid, fell at last
To reading lazily the letters graven
Around the royal tomb, red porphyry-paven,
Black-pillar'd, snowy-slabb'd, and sculptured fair,
He sat on, listless, with spiked elbows bare.
When (suddenly inspired with some new hate
To yells, the hollow roofs reverberate
As tho' the Judgment-Angel pass'd among
Their rafters, and the great beams clang'd and rung
Against his griding wing) he shrieks: "Come forth,
Adolphus, Duke of Guelders! for thy worth
Should not be hidden." Forthwith, all men shout,
"Strike, split, crash, dig, and drag the tyrant out!
Let him be judged!" And from the drowsy, dark,
Enormous aisles, a hundred echoes bark
And bellow—"Judged!"
Then those dread lictors all,
Marching before the magisterial
Curule of tardy Time, with rod and axe,
Fall to their work. The cream-white marble cracks,
The lucid alabaster flies in flakes,
The iron bindings burst, the brickwork quakes

Beneath their strokes, and the great stone lid shivers
With thunder on the pavement. A torch quivers
Over the yawning vault. The vast crowd draws
Its breath back hissing. In that sultry pause
A man o'erstrides the tomb, and drops beneath;
Another; then another. Still its breath
The crowd holds, hushful. At the last appears,
Unravaged by a hundred wicked years,
Borne on broad shoulders from the tomb to which
Broad shoulders bore him; coming, in his rich
Robes of magnificence (by sweating thumbs
Of savage artisans,—as each one comes
To stare into his dead face,—smeared and smudged),
Adolphus, Duke of Guelders, . . . to be Judged!

And then, and there, in that strange judgment-hall,
As, gathering round their royal criminal,
Troopt the wild jury, the dead Duke was found
To be as fresh in face, in flesh as sound,
As tho' he had been buried yesterday;
So well the embalmer's work from all decay
Had kept his royal person. With his great
Grim truncheon propt on hip, his robe of state
Heap'd in vast folds his large-built limbs around,
The Duke lay, looking as in life; and frown'd
A frown that seem'd as of a living man.

Meanwhile those judges their assize began.

And, having, in incredibly brief time,
Decided that in nothing save his crime
The Duke exceeded mere humanity,
Free, for the first time, its own cause to try,
So long ignored,—they peeled him, limb by limb,
Bare of the mingled pomps that mantled him ;
Stript, singed him, stabb'd him, stampt upon him, smote
His cheek, and spat upon it, slit his throat,
Crusht his big brow, and clove his crown, and left
Adolphus, Guelders' last own Duke, bereft
Of sepulture, and naked, on the floor
Of the Cathedral. Where, six days, or more,
He rested, rotting. What remain'd, indeed,
After the rats had had their daily feed,
Of the great Duke, some unknown hand, 'tis said,
In the town cesspool, last, deposited.[1]

"Et, comme ecrit Philippe de Comines (qui mêsmes a été employé en ce different par le Duc Charles de Bourgongne) le dit Adolph alla de nuict en plein hyver prendre son vieux pere hors du lict, et lui fit faire pieds nus cinq lieues de chemin, et le detint six mois prisonier en une profonde et obscure prison * * * Le Duc Charles de Bourgongne tacha par plusieurs fois de reconcilier le pere et le fils, mais en vain * * * Sur quoy le fils repondit qu'il aymoit mieux jêter son pere en un puits, et s'y precipiter apres luy que de consentir à un tel accord, disant que son pere avoit gouverné 44 ans, et que partant il estoit maintenant temps qu'il gouvernait aussi quelque peu."—D. Emanuel V. Meteren. Traduict de Flamend en Françoys par J. D. L. Haye 1618.

"Il alla vers Tournay, où il fut tué par les Français en une escarmouche, non obstant qu'il ne fit que crier Gueldre! Gueldre! ce qui luy arriva selon le juste jugement de Dieu pour sa grande rebellion."—*Ibid*, Fol. 9.

THE DUKE'S LABORATORY.

(A SCENE FROM FLORENCE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.*)

Persons represented.

FRANCESCO DEI MEDICI. *Grand Duke of Florence.*
PAOLO GIORDANO ORSINI, DUKE OF BRACCIANO. *The Grand Duke's Brother-in-law.*
FRA LUKE. *The Grand Duke's Alchemist.*

(*Night. Interior of the Laboratory at the Pitti.*)

FRA LUKE.

Another moment, and 'tis finisht! Ha,
The white precipitate begins to form!
We'll set thee there, Death's Angel. Presently
Thou shalt be sphered.

A portion of the dialogue between Francesco and Bracciano is taken from Signor Guerrazzi's Racconto of "Isabella Orsini." The Grand Duke's parting injunction to his brother-in-law is historical. The subject has been incidentally treated, in his "White Devil," by Webster; to whom one of his contemporary eulogists addresses these lines—

"Brachiano's Ill,
Murthering his Dutchesse, hath by thy rare skill
Made him renown'd."

Good ignorant folks believe
The art of kingcraft's writ in histories
By sages, conn'd from chronicles, and shaped
I' the council chamber. Fools! that wicked craft
Lies hidden here. And who would study it
Must be content to soil his hands . . . like these!
(That stain hath never come away—nor will.
And now the story that it tells is old
As the new fortunes of this House!) . . . must soil
His hands, I say, as these be soil'd, and make
That sort of surgeon's needle of his mind
Which may go thro' the bloody matter cramm'd
Into these murtherous manuals of death;
Wherein some monk, among his crucibles,
Hath noted down how such and such an one,
That plotted, prosper'd, sinn'd, and still slept sound.
Displeased a Prince on such and such a day,
And presently men miss'd him: such a lady,
With eyes so lustrous dark, and lips so red,
Wore roses in her bosom at the ball,
On such a night, and whisper'd one that smiled
Beside her for a moment in the dance,
'To-morrow I await thee,' then went home
Happy, and slept, and never waked: or how
On such a day the Conte de Virtù
Poison'd his uncle in a dish of beans,
With something in the salt,—which some surmise,
Erroneously, white hellebore, but he

That writes hath proved it arsenic. This, at least,
Is policy in the school of Cosimo !

And, night by night, I, sitting here, hatch death
For this detested race, whose badge I wear,
—The better to destroy them ! who, for this,
Deem me their servant . . . *me*, pale, patient slave
Of one sublime Idea, that, sitting throned
At God's right hand, looks down and laughs at kings,
While the slow hours lead on her destined day,
The Nemesis of History ! *me*, whose back
Is bent to this, by culling bitter herbs
To swell this scum, till it boil o'er, and purge
The rising cauldron of the wrath of God !

O thou, my martyr'd brother, sainted soul,
Dear murder'd ghost, that, unavenged, criest out
To shame Heaven's silence,—Fra Girolamo !
We two were servants to the same Idea :
Thou, in the sun : I, in the shadow : thou
The judge, and I the executioner.
Which chose the surer service ? Didst thou deem
Of such vile stuff as these degenerate times
Show all men made of, to rebuild anew
This broken Italy, and transmute to gold,
For Freedom's crown, mixt metal so made up
Of meanest elements ? O, too dearly paid,
Error too noble ! This flaw'd crucible,

And these dead minerals which, year by year,
I to ennoble have so idly toil'd,
Might teach us both the folly of that dream.
But thou art gone. And still the rabble crowd,
That freed Barabbas and rejected Christ,
Caps to the common tyrant. I work on,
Patient as Death. Because my trust is rather
In man's crimes than his virtues. Rather here,
With Messer Nicolo Machiavelli, brother,
(Whose book's the bible of that bitter faith
Thy life rejected, but thy death confirms)
Than in the force of any single life
To leaven this dead lump, and quicken it
With such a heat as in thine ashes left
The latest human hope of Florence cold,
Lost Savonarola! Let the shames o' the time
Increase and multiply! the swifter speeds
The hour of renovation, summonsing
To the stern sessions of the assembled Fates
Earth's full-grown wickednesses.

Sons of Cain,
Prosper,—and perish! whiles I nurse your race
For condemnation. I, whose eyes have seen
The father buried, and whose hands have hope
To sepulchre the sons! Who takes the sword
Shall perish by it. Be it mine to sow
The cropping seed, whilst thou, dread harvester

Of lusty sins, laborious Liberty,
Whose foison is the full-ear'd field of Time,
Sett'st to the sickle sharp thy scorn'd right hand,
Which shall anon with unrelenting swathe
Reap in the ruddy upsprout.
Hist! Who knocks?

FRANCESCO (*without*).

Francesco.

FRA LUKE.

Enter, Highness!

FRANCESCO (*entering*).

Salvum tibi!
Is the stuff ready?

FRA LUKE.

Yes. But it must cool.

FRANCESCO.

Oh, we can wait. How many drops?

FRA LUKE.

One, Highness.

FRANCESCO.

Is that enough? Well, life's a vapour, Friar.

Man's flesh is but the flower of the field,
And in the midst of life we are in death.
Last night the Cavaliere Antenori
Expired, at Twelve. He did confess his sins,
And died, I trust, repentant. Heaven have mercy
Upon his soul!

FRA LUKE.

Amen. What died he of?

FRANCESCO.

An apoplexy.

FRA LUKE.

Ah, . . . I comprehend!
The cause,—a cord about the jugular.

FRANCESCO.

Peace, Monk! A man dies by the hand of God.
The scandal grew . . . Why even King Philip writes,
—But let that pass. *De mortuis,* Fra Luke,
Nil nisi bonum. But for Eleanora . . .

FRA LUKE.

Is this for her?

FRANCESCO.

What? what? you question me?

Beware! But I have spoken with Don Pietro.
The honour of our brother's wife, Fra Luke!
By Bacchus! and the thing is infamous.
Let him look to it!

FRA LUKE.

Ay.

FRANCESCO.

But he's so light!
Heady and light. 'Tis idle talking to him.
And eaten up with debts. And vices. Zounds,
'Tis the most infamous knight in Christendom!
Without a spark of honour—piety—
The most ungodly Good-for-naught . . . 'Faith, Friar,
We are not fortunate in our family,
Nothing but scandals! I am all day long
White-washing their iniquities; and still
Our House stinks in men's nostrils—and they know it—
Worse than a plague-pit!

FRA LUKE.

But your Highness soon
Will make it quite a whited sepulchre.
O my good lord, how well this noble zeal
For the fair fame of your illustrious House
Becomes your august father's glorious son!

Could you but know how fervent is my faith
In that vast work, for whose accomplishment
My soul divines in your great daily deeds
The unanswerable warrant of high God!
But shrink not! shrink not! you have far to go,
And much to do,—in furtherance of God's will.
Shrink not, great Master of the Medici!

FRANCESCO.

Fra Luke, Fra Luke! pray Heaven to yield us strength.
We have most painful duties to perform.

FRA LUKE.

My nightly prayer is that your Highness ever
May—as you do—perform them.

FRANCESCO.

I have pledged
The mother of that lad, she shall not lack
Justice. But we must have no public prate.
It must be done discreetly.

FRA LUKE.

What lad, Master?

FRANCESCO.

That—Page of Isabella's—what's his name?
Lelio, I think—that Troïlo Orsini

Most impudently did assassinate
With no consideration for ourselves,
Nor for the Church of God.—For, think, Fra Luke!
The brat was stabb'd in our own livery,
And died before he could his sins confess,
In our own sister's house—before her face—
By day—and on a Sunday! What's the hour?

FRA LUKE.

Nigh midnight, by the Duomo clock. I heard
Three quarters striking to the middle night,
A little while before your Highness knock'd.

FRANCESCO.

I'll see him now, then. Go. The south-west wing,
(But not by the grand staircase, for your life!)
There's, in the little chamber, where last stood
That vase I sent His Catholic Majesty,
—My porcelain—you remember?—the new shape—
Now waiting—you shall know him by the plume—
A white one—in his hat—a man much injured:
Our sister's husband, Paolo Giordano
Orsini, of Bracciano. Bring him here
By the mask'd stairway. And be careful, Monk,
To slip the spear back in the Cupid's hand.
That's last of all the group, which, cluster'd, hides
The spring I show'd you, that unlocks the door
Between the two great mirrors. (Twenty Loves

Fighting a hare: Bianca's notion that,
And Venice work.) The Duke and I have business,
And you will find him waiting. Go.

FRA LUKE.

Your Highness,
Like the true artist, no detail neglects,
But your least work is thorough.

FRANCESCO.

Flatterer!
We all must do what little good we can.
Life is so short! Be quick.

FRA LUKE.

(More murder!) Sir
Your Highness shall not wait. I'll bring the Duke.
[*Exit* FRA LUKE.

FRANCESCO (*alone*).

Ay. Life is short, so short! Brief, brief and evil!
Oh what a business have I here, to purge
Of its bad blood this fat and pursy time,
And keep a decent cleanness in my Court!
When am I ever idle? Where's the Prince
In Christendom, whatever Philip says,
That's more decorous, or more circumspect
Than I, more nicely careful to maintain

Proper appearances in men and things,
And yet withal,—the shame of it's in that,—
More harass'd in his house by kindred more
Disorderly, more thankless! Ferdinand,
—And he a Cardinal, and my heir—that's worse!
Curse him! he's nothing but a conduit, he,
Perpetually conducting Christian coin
Out of the coffers of my careful thrift
Into the greasy purses of the Jews:
Making himself (a pillar of the Church!)
Chief corner-stone o' the new Jerusalem.
Small thanks to him, if I myself some day
Be not in Abraham's bosom! Heaven knows how
My substance goes to fatten Abraham's seed.
And the rogues multiply! Abram begets
Isaac, and Isaac Jacob. Pietro too,
The most unblushing profligate that breathes,
Connives, unshamed, at his own cuckledom!
And sister Isabella . . . . 'sdeath! I'll make
A clean sweep this time. Let them look to it.
'Sdeath! even Philip shall be satisfied.

[*The clock strikes outside from the Duomo.*

Hark! there's another day gone. Coin by coin,
The scrupulous Time tells out his sounding sum,
And rings the tested metal, that he owes
Eternity, that usurer of life,
Which, lending little, takes our all at last,
And gives back nothing got.

Go, coin of time,
No longer current! pay in part life's loan.
Go, with the image of a Christian Prince
Stamp'd on thee, to the treasury of Heaven!
Bear witness for me to the King of Kings,
That I, Francesco dei Medici,
Grand Duke of Florence by the grace of God,
That grace requite by no disgraceful rule,
Uphold the Church, promote Religion, keep
Morality respected, and pluck off
Even from the cherisht body of my House
Offending limbs. Bear witness there's no deed
Done in the dark against Heaven's Throne, or mine,
(Which to keep heavenly white is my desire,)
But I have eyes to see it, and no place
On earth so distant, where ill-doers hide,
But I have arms to reach it.

Welcome, Duke!

BRACCIANO (*entering with* FRA LUKE).

Your Highness' humble servant. What strange place
Is this I stand in?

FRANCESCO.

The State's workshop, Sir.
Good simple soldier, in this little cell
The spider, Policy, all arms, all eyes,

Spins, unperceived, the crafty web that takes
That buzzing fool, the world. My father, Duke,
He was a man by all mankind esteem'd
Most fortunate. His hair, before its time,
Grew grey with study. Study of what, you wonder?
Chemicals. Studied where? Here, in this cell.
Chemistry, Soldier, trust me, is a science
Which now-a-days we sceptred students need
To study more than your rough art of war.
But that's beyond. Be seated, brave Bracciano.
We prove our love and confidence in you,
Seeing you here, where few have seen us. Sit.

BRACCIANO.

I wait your Highness' orders.

FRANCESCO.

True. But stay,
You have not slept upon the road from Rome.
For that we thank you. 'Twas not without cause
That our despatch was urgent. But, no doubt,
You must be tired and hungry, and in need
Of some refreshment. Ope the door, Fra Luke.
There's supper in the anteroom.

BRACCIANO.

No, no!
I am not hungry. I have supp'd elsewhere.
I thank your Highness, but—

FRANCESCO.

Tut! tut! a glass
Of Cyprus wine? a brace of beccafiche?

BRACCIANO.

My Lord, no, thank you. Savory tho' they be,
These chemicals of yours scarce whet the edge
Of a man's appetite: and as for me,
I have about me no digestive stuff,
No spider paste, no powder'd unicorn horn,
Or any other kind of stimulant
Against a too-long after-dinner sleep.

FRANCESCO.

Ha, ha, Bracciano! ever sharp and merry!

BRACCIANO.

No, Sir. Most sad and sober. You were pleased
To invite me hither with some urgency
Which yet I know no cause for. Being come
From Rome in haste to hear them, I now wait
Your Highness' orders.

FRANCESCO.

Leave us, then, Fra Luke.
You shall be satisfied, good brother-in-law.
A word, Fra Luke! Your pardon, dear Orsini.
But if you knew what lovers you have here

(I and Fra Luke. Is it not so, Fra Luke?)
Of the true masters of the Tuscan tongue!
There's in our private library, Fra Luke,
Fresh from the printer's hand.... what type! what type!
The purified and expurgated text,
—'Tis by the Cavaliere Leonardo,—
Of the Decameron of Boccaccio.
Be good enough to look at it. One thing
Is sure, at least,—you will admire the type.
And let us know your mind upon the text
Presently. On the whole, it seems to us
The Cavaliere has succeeded well,
And with no common skill, in no slight task.
So many shocking and unseemly parts
In the first nude robustness of the text
Needing to be decorously conceal'd
In flowers of language carefully arranged,
Or from the body of the book removed
Wholly, with such incision nice as leaves
No beauty blemish'd. Look at it, Fra Luke.
Oh, what a fallen thing is Human Nature!
Alas, alas, Fra Luke! is it not sad
That such a genius, such a man as this
Messer Giovanni, should be damn'd? And yet,
What can we think, Fra Luke? what must we fear?
Such genius with such immorality!
Sad! sad!

FRA LUKE.

The Almighty knows the world too well
To expect five legs of mutton from a sheep.
The best of us, in our imperfectness,
Must largely count upon that tolerance
In Him that, having made, best knows, mankind.
But, may it please your Highness, there's no doubt
Messer Giovanni did repent his sins
Upon his death-bed, and so pass'd in peace.

FRANCESCO.

Are you quite sure of that? I am very glad.
A man of so much genius! And you say
He saw, at last, Fra Luke, and did repent,
The many errors of his pen? Well, well,
Morality thus triumphs at the last.
It comforts me to think he is not damn'd.
May it be true!

BRACCIANO.

('Sblood! am I his tame hawk?
To be held hooded on the hand of him,
While he—the pepper merchant—) I remind
Your Highness that, not having yet the honour
To be a lackey of the Medici,
I lack that patientness which, as it seems,
Such office craves.

FRANCESCO.

Indeed?

[*In his ear, after surveying him a moment in silence.*

Restrain this fire
A moment. We must fuel it anon.
Off then, Fra Luke, into the Library!
Peruse Boccaccio till we call.

FRA LUKE.

I go, Sir.
(The spider and the wasp. I back the spider.)

[*Exit* FRA LUKE.

FRANCESCO.

Be seated, Duke. Be seated. Now, to business.

[*After a pause.*

Duke of Bracciano, our good brother-in-law,
It needs not now that we remember you
Of our past loves, and care for your good name:
Whose house so neighbours ours, that fire lit there
Must burn ourselves.

BRACCIANO.

I know your Highness' goodness,
And—as it merits—thank it. Pray, my lord,
Come quickly to the matter.

FRANCESCO.

Sir, at once.
Which, were it less notorious than we know it,
I could have fain forgotten. O my lord,
We are the laughingstock of this lewd town!
I am in you offended, you in me.
Our most unworthy sister—your worse wife—
O'ertasks the common tongue to count up all
Her manifold misconducts.

BRACCIANO.

Isabella!

FRANCESCO.

No better than a strumpet, good Bracciano.

BRACCIANO.

Uncivil Sir, he lives not that dare say it!
Were't in the Duomo's self, I'd strangle him.

FRANCESCO.

O much, my lord, I must lament the cause,
As much I do admire your noble anger.
And then, to think the traitor lives—

BRACCIANO.

His name?

FRANCESCO.

Who hath so wickedly abused your faith
Too fondly given—all ties of blood—all titles
That honour's held by—

BRACCIANO.

Hell, and all its devils!
His name? his name?

FRANCESCO.

Ay, that's the worst of all.

BRACCIANO.

I am stifling.

FRANCESCO.

Tho' the town might tell it thee.

BRACCIANO.

The name, Grand Duke of Florence?

FRANCESCO.

Troïlo
Orsini, and thy cousin.

BRACCIANO.

Troïlo!

FRANCESCO.

Most basely hath betray'd you.

BRACCIANO.

Bear with me.

FRANCESCO.

Ay. Realise that first. It will take time.
For such things toughly task credulity
In all men's natures, but the soldier's most;
Whose noble wont is never to expect
The blow that stabs behind. But, for the proofs
Of this bad truth . . . no matter! they can wait.
Duke, I have brooded on these wrongs of yours
Till . . .

BRACCIANO.

Yes. I understand. In such a place
As this . . . what must I call it, Duke of Florence?

FRANCESCO.

Grand Duke, Orsini.

BRACCIANO.

Certainly. Most grand!
In this detestable den of yours, I say,
Where nothing wholesome is, nought's natural
But what is wholly monstrous. Here you hatch

Each chance-spawn'd slander of the chattering town,
Shut in this stew where no good air is breathed,
Where each vile fancy cooks her fœtid eggs,
Where all abominable thoughts are brew'd,
Until at last, from brooding on these things,
These lies . . .

FRANCESCO.

Bracciano!

BRACCIANO.

If you spake the truth
Your countenance . . .

FRANCESCO.

Be still, unhappy man!
By Bacchus! married men are mostly fools,
But you are an amazing maniac.

BRACCIANO.

Troïlo? Now I'll tell you why I know
That is a lie. When he and I were boys—

FRANCESCO.

When you and he were boys! Are you a man?

BRACCIANO.

Ay, and at nature's manly bidding spurn

The lie which wrongs all natural manliness.
You are deceived, my lord. I'll not believe it.

FRANCESCO.

You are deceived. Most wickedly deceived.

BRACCIANO.

I'll not believe it.

FRANCESCO.

Duke you *will*: tho' now
You would not. O unhappy infidel,
Already all the town doth pity thee.

BRACCIANO.

That cannot be. Were this the stalèd jest
Of street and tavern, as your talk implies,
I should, myself, have heard it.

FRANCESCO.

What, at Rome?

BRACCIANO.

Why not at Rome? There's talk enough in Rome?
That's little to the credit, as it goes,
Of the illustrious family of my wife.

FRANCESCO.

My lord, we know it. More behoves it us
To silence this same talk. But married men
Are a strange kind of asses with short ears
That are not quickly tickled by such talk.
It is the mercy, Duke, of Providence
That made them thus.

BRACCIANO.

Prince, you may be deceived.
Even Princes know not everything.

FRANCESCO.

Ay, Duke.
But one—Francesco dei Medici—
Knows everything—at least in Florence. Much
To you and me, my lord, it matters not
If true or false the talk of Florence town.
The talking town talks of us. That's enough.
The fault of that's in Isabella now.
If talk goes on, the fault will be in us.
For we are gentlemen and Christians, Duke.
I have a brother's duty to perform,
And you a husband's. But the talk's all true,
It happens, this time. By and by peruse
These papers, Duke. And learn betimes to know
That I know everything.

BRACCIANO.

Most wretched man,
Thou buyest thy knowledge at too dear a price!
That which we know must make us ignorant
Of happiness for ever: ignorant
Of wholesome human faith for evermore.
O God, the misery of knowing this!
The misery of it!

FRANCESCO.

Ay. 'Tis bad enough.
You see, that rascal Troïlo has spoil'd all
Our care to keep things quiet. But for this
We might have let your Duchess grow in peace
That crop of horns for her wise husband's head,
Which now, I fear, must off with some sharp lopping.
But he, the fool, for stupid jealousy
Of some well-looking lad, a sort of Page
Of Isabel's, I think,—no name, no name,—
Good honest country folk his kindred are,
And scandalized amazingly,—almost
It makes me smile, their infinite surprise
And indignation at what, after all,
Was, tho' on his part an immense mistake,
Yet, in its way, a kind of compliment
From such a man as your illustrious cousin
To their unlucky kinsman: but, you see,
As I was telling you, from jealousy

This foolish Troïlo has stabb'd the youth,
Almost in public. And, in short, the thing
Has made an ugly talk about us all.
And this dead cub's curst dam is shrieking out
For law, and justice, and the devil knows what,
To me, Grand Duke of Florence.

BRACCIANO.

Troïlo!
The gentle, ever-quiet, small, weak boy
I used to carry, when we two were young,
Upon my back—barefooted I, and he
Hugging my neck, while, like a wise church daw,
He chatter'd, with sagacious spriteliness
(The sagest little man that ever was!)
High up the mountain torrents! Troïlo,
Him that I taught to ride, to fence, to swim,
And never yet could teach an evil thing,
Rebuked, as well my boisterous youth might be,
By that girl's face of his! My Troïlo,
My more than cousin, sister-brother! he
To whose chaste woman-hands I gave in charge,
As to a saint's, my honour and my home!

FRANCESCO.

Most villanously hath betray'd them both.
Bracciano, milk that's spilt . . . You know the proverb.
Think only how you best may be avenged.

BRACCIANO.

Avenged? on whom? on what? On all mankind,
For being what I now must deem men all,
Traitors and knaves? No better, sure, the rest,
Than my most trusted friend! All women, too?
For being—what my wife has proved they are,
That was the best of them I ever knew!
Vengeance? on all the world! for all the world
Is my wrong-doer,—suffering such wrongs in it.
Vengeance? on Heaven! that made, and yet maintains,
So vile a world as this. O where, where, where,
In all the armoury of human wrath
At most inhuman wrongs, shall I find arms
Enough for such a vengeance?

FRANCESCO.

Stoop thine ear.
Stay! let me first make sure we are unheard.
Keyholes have ears: those ears have tongues: those tongues
Utterance: and I, myself, the great arch spy,
From parasitic spies am never free.
No! I have tried the doors. All's fast. This way.
Now listen.

[*Whispers.*

BRACCIANO.

Devil! thou hast pour'd hellfire
Into my veins!

FRANCESCO.

Thou hast no choice, Bracciano.

BRACCIANO.

Forbid it Heaven!

FRANCESCO.

Oh, Heaven doth forbid it,
But Isabel hath done it.

BRACCIANO.

Misery!

FRANCESCO.

Undoubtedly. But duty, not the less.
Duty, Bracciano, duty!

BRACCIANO.

And my boy,
My innocent brat! When he shall ask one day
'Father, where is my mother?' God will listen,
And only Hell dare answer!

FRANCESCO.

Bah! Myself,
I'll answer. Tush, the boy need never know:
Or, knowing it, he shall approve the deed.
I'll educate him.

BRACCIANO.

You? And after death
Must come the judgment.

FRANCESCO.

She is judged already.
'Sdeath, Duke! What wrongs are mine to match with yours?
Yet she I sacrifice to your just wrath
And righteous vengeance, is my sister.

BRACCIANO.

Ay,
But not the mother of thy children. Oh,
If they must lose their lives, all they whose names
Are lost in credit by a losel tongue,
There'll be none living left to slay the rest.
Why should I rashly ratify the word
Of the unthinking rabble?

FRANCESCO.

Cæsar's wife
(Remember, Duke, what Suetonius says)
He suffer'd not to be suspected even.

BRACCIANO.

Ay, man. But still, he did not murder her.

FRANCESCO.

Hush! murder's not the word.

BRACCIANO.

Oh, judgment, is it?
Just judges are we, I and thou, Francesco!
Listen to me, Sir. I'm no hypocrite.
Whose fault was, first of all, this hideous coil?
Oh, do you think that I deceive myself
Enough to be deceived by you? Sir, hear me.
Here was I, Head of the Orsini, son
Of a long line of ducal sires, whose names
Were old,—incalculably old, I say,
Before the first small Medici was dropt
Into this world, by chance, to make what way
Chance still might help him to find out, thro' it.
So far, so well. What, then, was mine, to want?
Money. To get which, what was mine to give?
Just this same ducal name, and lineage old,
With something here and there in men's esteem,
Which, born with these, Wealth, born without it, buys.
You had the wealth, you Medici: and I
What, needing wealth, is still by wealth desired.
So I said,—or, to say the truth, not I—
But all friends said to me—'This Isabel,
A daughter of the Medici, is rich,
Young, too, and beautiful as all admit,
Secure the money with the girl, Orsini!'

And you,—illustrious pepper-merchants all,
Pray what said you? Oh, 'Let him take the girl,
And take the money, whereby we take him,
The threadbare duke, with his unbroken line
And broken castles,—just the man we want!'
So much for us. The world, of course, cried Bravo!
Clapp'd hands, extoll'd the 'Suitable Alliance.'
Which one of all of us once asked himself
'But what, for her part, does the lady gain?
Has she, by chance, a heart? and what says that?
Well, I believe that I have been no worse,
If, at the best, no better on the whole,
Than other men thus suitably allied.
I liked my wife, admired, respected her;
Took it for granted she should be content
To fill the proper place up in my life
Where she was wanted, and remain therein,
Just as you take for granted, the stone saint
Will stay, and decently demean himself,
In that particular cathedral niche
The architect allots him, heeding not
The dulness or the chilness of the place.
And when, to crown it all, there came an heir
Both to the money, and the name to boot,
Content with that result, which seem'd the end,
Small further care about my wife had I,
Than to select the best man I could find
(He seem'd so then) to take up and perform

The *duties*,—(mark! not daring to desire
The dear *reward* love's care of love receives,—)
Of guardian of the honour of a wife
Whose spouse . . . Oh, there's no dearth of weighty cause
For my continued absence: fame, the field,
The Church's banner, then, the friendship vow'd
Don John, Lepanto—man's career in short!
Of course, meanwhile, with business pleasure goes:
Of course I have my mistresses: my wife
No doubt has heard the Accorombona's name:
But that's a trifle. All's allow'd to men.
Of course a wife in fault has no excuse.
Of course, altho' we rate the women all
As three times weaker than our worthless selves,
We yet expect, we have the right to expect,
That they shall be thrice stronger. Wherefore not?
Man can appeal to man. Woman to whom?
Man's both her judge and executioner.
Woe to her if she slips! Just judges we!

FRANCESCO.

Bracciano, all this. . . . .

BRACCIANO.

Interrupt me not!
You're in the way of it. Your turn is coming.
For what was my worst, maddest, wickedest
Of all mistakes? To dream that I could leave,

Even for an hour, with hope to find again,
Man's honesty or woman's virtue, here
In the foul precincts of this cursèd Court,
Where all the air's one malady, and all
That breathe it are distemper'd! here, I say,
Where every shape and kind of wickedness,
For which the name's to find yet, grows and thrives,
And at the top of all its hateful growth,
Fed with the sinful sap of all the rest,
Puts forth the crowning vice—Hypocrisy!
Ha, ha! Grand Duke of Florence, I thank God
For one thing heartily! I have made you wince,
And writhe, like the tormented snake you are.
You hate me: and I know a way to hurt you:
That comforts me a little. Hypocrite!
Do you begin to feel that, after all,
The Devil's not so safe in Hell, but what
A ray of Heaven gets at him now and then,
And stings him thro' all custom?

FRANCESCO.

Madman, and fool!
Do you forget that you are in my power?

BRACCIANO.

I forget nothing. But you lie, Grand Duke.
Out of your power I have pass'd away
Forever, and you know it, this sad night.

How can you hurt me? you have done your worst.
You cannot hurt my wife. I have no wife.
My son? I know not if I have a son.
The adulteress has one. Would you hurt my friends?
There's no man in the world I love or trust.
My name? Disgraced already, you aver.
My life? What's life worth, lacking what mine lacks?
But you'll NOT take my life. First, for you cannot.
Easier could I kill you than you kill me.
We are alone, just now. Besides, I know,
And you know, that you dare not. Still to you
My life's more useful than my death can be.
To me 'tis useless now. Away with lies,
So thoroughly worn-out, they but show the truth
They should conceal! Francesco, to speak plain,
We do not love each other, never did;
But all we ever had in common still
Remains to us. Community of wrong.

FRANCESCO.

Community of interest.

BRACCIANO.

As you please.
And so to finish this vile work of ours.
Only, for Heaven's sake, Sir, no fine names!
If all that you have said be true . . .

FRANCESCO.

It is.
Convince yourself. The proofs are in your hand.

BRACCIANO.

Presently. 'Tis the custom of our House.
And I'll have surer warrant. Her own lips,
Not mine—not yours—no lips, no lips but hers
Shall sound the sentence, if confess'd the crime.
My sentence! For the punishment is mine,
As mine the fault was. She must die.

FRANCESCO.

That's sense.

BRACCIANO.

Die! yes. And then *my* punishment begins.
For I must live. There's punishment for both.
Duke, . . . *you* have dealings with that sort of—men
I would not call them: yet there's ne'er a rogue
In Florence, but, I doubt not he is worth
As much as any other honest man!
Pray, did you ever notice carefully
A hangman's countenance? I try to think
That I am altogether pass'd away
So far out of all human sense of what
My misery is, that I may dare assume
The inexorably stern judicial mood

Of God's Destroying Angel. You are witness
I have already judged, and have condemn'd,
Myself,—or rather say, the man I was
Once, and can never be again. Not he,
I try to think,—not he, but that man's judge,
Ascends the justice seat and summons forth
Unhappy Isabella to her doom.
But there's a something left of man in me
—I know not what—'tis strangely out of place—
That troubles all. And, turn which way I will,
These hands of mine still seem a hangman's hands,
And we two, here, conspirators—worse, worse,
Cut-throats! and she our victim. Why is that?

FRANCESCO.

Because you are a simpleton. Because
Your mind, just now, puts all things out of place,
And your life's habit has not help'd your will
To put them promptly in their places back.
I see in all this,—and see nothing else—
Plainly, a duty,—painful, I admit,
Painful to me, no less, Sir, than to you,
But still, a duty, to be done, and done
At once, and once done, straight from thought dismiss'd.
The duty's ours: the consequence is not.
Was Abraham careful of the consequence
When, to please God, he sacrificed his son?
Or did he call himself a murderer?

Yet Abraham's son was guiltless. As for you,
Your wife is guilty. There's no doubt of that.
You choose to call merely 'fine names' what are
Really fine feelings. You are thoroughly wrong:
For are we Christian gentlemen, or not?
That's the sole point, Duke.

BRACCIANO.

If we be, I say
God help the times!

FRANCESCO.

Amen. God help the times!
God help us all! And most of all, help me!
That have the most to bear of all of you.
And, Duke, you wrong me. Hypocrite I'm not.
The world leaves its chief actors no such choice
As you may fancy, how to act their parts.
Dissimulation is imposed on us.
And let me tell you, there are certain signs
Already, in the crowd,—I can't say what,
I *feel* them,—that our parts must be played off
Quickly. I think I can, at times, detect
A certain ominous stir about the mass:
Strange faces with uncomfortable eyes:
New comers, whom their places do not please:
Vague sounds not wholly satisfactory:
A restlessness that . . . Well, it matters not!
I shall have play'd *my* part out, anyhow.

Let after comers manage as they may.
Our stage is old. One of these days, perchance,
It may give way, and there'll be broken bones.
I shall have strutted off it. Hypocrite
I am not. But profound dissimulator,
Yes. That's my part. And hypocrite to you!
To you at least I have been frank enough.
Outspoken, like the friendly gentleman
You'll have occasion yet to find I am.
But your unhappy state excuses all.
You'll sober, and be sorry by and by.
In thus consulting you, thus timely, thus
Freely and unreservedly, on what
Is after all a matter that concerns,
With or without your leave, or any man's,
Ourselves in chief,—(for Isabel's our stuff)
We think that we have shown you full regard,
Friendly and honourable confidence,
Deserving recognition. Aught, unknown
To you, we would not willingly have done.
But, knowing what you know, if it would ease
The sort of natural trouble your unuse
To such necessities now suffers, Duke,
We'll rid your hands of what remains to do
And undertake . . .

BRACCIANO.

No, no! not you! not you!

To you 'twould be no punishment. To me
'Tis punishment already.

FRANCESCO.

As you will.
But you're so hot! You'll blunder I half fear.
I need not say, do nothing unconvinced.
Convinced you will be. But remember, Duke,
No public talk, no scandal! Nothing rude,
Conspicuous, unseemly! What's to do
Must be discreetly done. Ha, by the way,
My brother Ferdinand writes me word, Bracciano,
That you are much indebted: sorely prest
To make good certain obligations due,
Nor longer now renewable. Is that true?

BRACCIANO.

Pish! yes.

FRANCESCO.

Well, Duke, we'll settle this for you.
Count up your debts. Ah, if you only knew
How you have wrong'd us? But you'll find that out.
Count up your debts. We'll pay them.

BRACCIANO.

Peace! What's left

For me to care for? Let the roof-tree fall,
Now all beneath it's buried! all, all, all!

FRANCESCO.

You must not think of things so sullenly.
But as a man that's master of his wrongs,
And greater even than the greatness of them.
Rouse! rouse!

BRACCIANO.

Francesco, I will tell you now
A thing will give you pleasure. Take it, fiend!
'Tis the last pleasure you will get from me.
I think, if I were capable just now
Of any feeling in the least like joy,
'Twould be to know that you were miserable
Beyond endurance: therefore I suppose,
Since no less cordially do you hate me
Than I hate you, 'twill give you pleasure too,
To hear what I shall say. I said erewhile
I liked my wife, admired, respected her.
That's over. I can not respect her now,
Admire, or like her. All that's worlds away!
But what do you suppose I am going to do
Presently, when I leave this den? To murder
The woman that I love! love, love, do you hear?
I never loved her when I thought her pure.
I know her not pure now. I love her now.

And I am going to murder her. Laugh, Fiend!
You see that I am miserable enough.
Make much of that. Mine she was yesterday,
And yesterday I was an honest man.
I did not love her then. I loved myself.
All's changed. She is mine no more: we both are lost.
For, losing her, I have lost myself. To-night
I, with the murderer's heart in me already,
Love her, the harlot that I go to kill.
Have that writ down by some choice Tuscan scribe,
A drama for the devil to chuckle at:
A devil's drama, for a devil's delight,
Acted by devils damn'd beyond redemption!

FRANCESCO.

The heart of man's a mystery!

BRACCIANO.

All's so clear!
The Might-have-been, which never can be now,
The Must-be-now, which never could have been,
Were't not that knowledge ever comes too late,
And all that's good is, in this wretched world,
Good miss'd! Why came I in such haste from Rome?
Not at your mandate: tho' your missive seem'd
The pretext still. For I was thoroughly tired
Of what had been. 'Tis not, I think, in you
To understand how it should come about

That sometimes in the sudden midst of all
The busy so-call'd waking life of a man,
There slides across the spirit that's moving it
A silent instantaneous dreamlike change:
Born, as in dreams such changes are, perchance
Of something, Heaven knows what, so small, so small,
That with a mystic trouble turns aside
Suddenly the main currents of the mind:
The look in a dog's eyes: a stranger's talk:
The death of some man that you never knew:
Less, less than that! chance odours after rain,
Or old-new colours in an evening sky,
And all at once the Present is the Past,
The Past the Present, and the Future all
One nameless yearning to recapture . . . what?
Ah that's the question! But with me 'twas Home,
A resting from the nowhere-leading ways
Of feverish Life's sick walking up and down,
Peace, and the quiet-hearted household loves!

FRANCESCO.

Marry again then!

BRACCIANO.

Plaudite! valete!

All's as it should be here. The play's complete.
Look round, admire the order of the parts!
Is not all Florence represented here?

The art of murdering and concealing murder,
Call'd statecraft by this time's complacent voice,
Behold, on yonder silent shelves all round,
Its speechless representatives! The rest?
Oh, all the rest's in our two persons play'd!
Behold the Personages of the Age:
Conspirator, Assassin, Hypocrite,
Prince without truth, and Subject without trust.
As for the People, it is quite as much
Visible here as elsewhere, just at present:
The People's part is properly left out:
The Prostitute's behind the scenes: the Spy,
The Cuckold,—all are here I think, and all
Are represented worthily. What else
Is wanting?

FRANCESCO.

Ho! Fra Luke!

BRACCIANO.

True, I forgot.
The Church!

FRANCESCO.

What ho! Fra Luke! Fra Luke, I say!

FRA LUKE (*entering*).

(They have not kill'd each other? no such luck!

I had a vague sweet hope of some such thing.)
Your Highness call'd me?

FRANCESCO.

Well? The New Edition?
What of it, Friar?

FRA LUKE.

I like ever best
Each last Edition of what I may call
Your Highness' careful study and extreme care
To improve, suppress, eradicate what needs
The pruning-knife of strict Morality,
This world's rank garden's wary weeder.

FRANCESCO.

Ah!
I am glad that we appear to have done well.
Dear, dear Bracciano! so then you *must* go?
Well, 'twere but cruel kindness on our part
To keep you any longer from the home
Where those that love you there have so long miss'd
Your welcome presence. Oh, Sir, we expect
To hear of famous doings presently,—
Prompt slaying of the fatted calf,—what not?
All sorts of welcomes to this best event!
Heaven bless you, dear Bracciano!

FRA. LUKE.

(Strange! He knows
That I know all. Yet, for the life of him,
The habit of hypocrisy so sticks,
He cannot help pretending to deceive me.)

FRANCESCO.

Conduct the Duke, Fra Luke. The Duke's impatient.
And, dear Bracciano, I'm so glad, so glad
That, as regards the trifle we discuss'd,
We are of one mind wholly. And the money,
The money shall be paid. Zounds! it would be
Abominable, unchristian, if we left
In the curst clutches of those rascally Jews
A moment longer our dear sister's husband.
Go! joy be with you. Stay, one parting word!
When of the odious truth you are assured,
I pray you, Sir, remember that you are
A gentleman and a Christian.

BRACCIANO.

Heaven and earth!

FRA LUKE.

(I back'd the spider. Well, the spider wins!)
This way, illustrious Senior Duke! this way.

[*Exeunt* BRACCIANO *and* FRA LUKE.

FRANCESCO (*alone*).

Bluster! all bluster! For I hold him fast.
Astonishing! how soon a man forgets
Debts to Despair. Before a month is past
I shall be pray'd to pay his other debts,
Almost as desperate. They are all the same.
'Twere well to have him watch'd, tho', till he's tame.
Poor fellow! 'tis so fresh to him, all this.
Well, now that's off our mind which weighs on his.
Suscipiunt montes pacem populo!
Servite Dominum in lætitiâ. So
Jacta est alia, the bolt is sped.
A litany now: and then, content, to bed!

VANINI*

LECTURES BEFORE THE SORBONNE.

(PARIS, SIXTEENTH CENTURY.)

WELCOME, dear friends! . . . tho' to a stranger's heart!
For, 'mid your fair French faces, as they throng

* Lucilio (self-styled Julius Cæsar, and Pompeius) Vanini, was one of that numerous Army of Martyrs who have been canonized by no Church. Murdered by the Parliament of Toulouse upon an infamous and unfounded charge of Atheism, his memory has been calumniated by the few and forgotten by the many. I think that no reader of his 'Dialogues' will accuse me of exaggerating the vanity of the man. It was excessive, but not ignoble: and to it I am disposed to attribute much of the heroism with which he endured torture and faced death. When we remember that his martyrdom and murder were justified by their perpetrators on the grounds of the audacious freedom with which Vanini had expressed unorthodox opinions, the excessive caution and timidity of all his writings significantly illustrate what was considered "Freedom of thought" in the Sixteenth Century. On being accused of Atheism by his judges, he picked a straw from the ground, and proceeded, by arguments which would probably have satisfied Paley, to demonstrate the existence of God from the existence of the straw. Those arguments, however, did not satisfy the Tribunal, which condemned him, first to have his tongue cut out, and then to be burned alive. He went through it all, and died, "cheerfully for the sake of Philosophy," as he said, with a heroism, never surpassed and rarely equalled by any of those martyrs who are admired as brave men because they died in vindication—not of Doubt—but of a Faith, which promised them immediate beatitude. Yet consider the difference!

Fast, fast about me, I perceive—if not
The name of Italy encharacter'd,
Such as her sultry suns with swarthy finger
Upon my own have traced it—yet the eye
Of keen enquiry, and the eager cheek,
Native to such as Nature's hand hews out
From her unfeatured and inglorious mass,
For common kindred in the shining band
Of those that both desire, and dare, TO KNOW!
Therefore, I take you to my heart of hearts:
High peers, whose brows by Thought are privileged
To owe no homage to the narrow zones
Of partial Place, and casual Circumstance,
But hold high colloquy with those supreme
And solitary Spirits which allow
No bondage of the branding zodiac
To limit their hereditary realms
In universal space! Therefore, I bid
My best self, freely, to your fellowship:
And, as, within the mystic circle traced
By Persic priests, the affable Genius
(Appeased by myrrhy fumes that please him well)
Doth, to delight each mild-eyed Magian,
Unpack the treasures of the ransackt world,
Else hutcht from sight 'twixt either sleeping pole,
—Gold, by wing'd gryphons for Abassin kings
Guarded in mountain treasure-houses deep,
Great wizard gems from Solomon's thumb ring,

And sea-green marbles from Caucasian mines,
Thick-vein'd with white fire ;—so, sweet Mages, I,
Lured by your loves, do at your feet lay low
The spoils from Science filch'd by stealthy toil ;
Rare secrets of the starry universe,
Flying around the centre, and what dwells
Deep in the undivulged mind of man.

I mark the wonder widening in your eyes
As they turn to me, wistful what comes next ;
And hear you murmuring, as my spirit moves
Among you like the unseen wind that blows
To billowy toil full-bearded harvest fields.
" Can it be true ? " ye ask yourselves, . . . " The man
Before you, with the scarcely-wrinkled brow
And yet unsilver'd hair,—can he have reach'd
So soon the cloudy summits that command
That spacious prospect which the hoary sage
Scarce sees before he sinks into the grave ?
How many cycles in the wilderness
Did Moses wander, leading right and left
His puzzled followers, till, fatigued to death,
He, from the top of Pisgah gazing, saw
The Promised Land, and died. Yet hath the man
That stands before you, speaking like a voice
Out of the sunder'd stars, imperative,
Some years of youth still left to fling away."
And so ye marvel. And I marvel not

That ye delay to put aside all doubt.
Because I know that half the Prophet's power
Upon the multitude (tho' ye, indeed,
I count not of the many, but the few)
Lies in the lifted rod, the flowing robe,
The hoary beard, and many-furrow'd brow.
Yet, friends, 'tis true,—all true! The man ye see me,
Such as I am, I have attain'd the end
And eminence of all the sciences.
A spirit zoned with the nine-folded spheres,
That in his right hand turns the rolling globe
Around, for pastime,—I command the Powers
That hide within the heights and depths of things,
Not easily commanded. In a word,
Whatever may be known by man, I know.

Yes! I, the Italian Doctor, Julius Cæsar
Lucilio Vanini, whom you know
Already by no casual report,
Have by much study, travel, and strong thought,
Master'd in some few thirty years, or less,
Philosophy, and physics: medicals:
Theology; and law, in both its branches,
The civil and the canon (for who knows not
That *in utroque jure* I am Doctor?)
All schools of East or West: anatomy:
Mechanics: mathematics: music: all
Poets, grammarians, and historians:

Natural magic, and astronomy,
Astrology: with what from these a man
May further fashion, in the advance of time,
By sharp experience of himself, to add
Knowledge to knowledge. Also I have writ
On Free Will, Fate, and Providence, confuting
Whatever was by others said before
Upon these subjects, and constraining those
That read my books to burn their own: besides
Two dialogues on the contempt of glory
Which, that I do not crave a vain renown
But have sought Science for her own sweet sake,
Shall witness for me to all candid minds:
And,—so you shall not fear that I indulge
Such froward spirit as our Holy Church
Not seldom in her children hath reproved,
Prodigals that forsake the Father's board
To feed, and starve, on miserable husks,
—A long Apology—*Concilio*
Pro Tridentino—of the Council, and
Decrees of Trent: with many other matters,
Fully discoursed. Which books, whoe'er will read them,
May at the Fair in Frankfort easily
Obtain, thro' any merchant of this town.
And I have visited the greater part
Of Europe. I have traversed Italy,
Whereof no city is to me unknown,
Nor I to it. In Holland, Germany,

And England, every University
I have both seen, and sometime studied there.
Nay, was I not the chosen and the chief
Disciple of the English Carmelite
John Bacon, prince of the Averröists?
So that . . . albeit I would not have you deem
I in pretension do exceed the pith
And marrow of performance, nor indeed
That, whatsoe'er it may be I have done,
I have done more than any man may do,
Let him but love, as I loved, Learning more
Than house, or lands, or any other good,
(Albeit such fervour is not to be found
In men of insufficient elements)
. . . . I dare affirm what I erewhile averr'd,
That whatsoe'er a man may know, *I know.*

And as for Pomponat, men's present Mentor,
He, and Averröes, whom he but follows
—(Altho' I would not count them less than kings
Whose erudition and audacity
Hath made them half to be esteem'd as gods)
Let these, with Cardan, and I will not name
How many more that be their vavasours,
Sit at my feet forever, and be dumb!
My worst is better than the best of theirs.
(Believe I do not boast!) for they, indeed,
Have but rough-guess'd the ways which I have paved

With ponderous fact, and irrefragable
Results, accumulated carefully,
To distances divined not by these men.
Which you shall also, if you will, reach with me:
For what I know I would to all make known:
And what I have would share with who will have it:
Since knowledge by division grows to more.
Is it not written that the Teachers—they
That have turn'd many to the light—shall shine
Like stars in heaven? Which shine not for themselves
But for the illumination of mankind.
Only believe me!

Yet, for all, I see
That you do think I boast myself beyond
The stretch of my deserving. If, good friends,
You deem it thus, believe me you do wrong
Me first,—and, in the consequence, yourselves!
For I conceive there's nothing more beseems
A teacher, than assurance of the worth
Of what he teaches, and his own to teach it.
On these two points behoves the man to have
No doubt whatever. If he doubt himself,
Let him be dumb and put belief in others.
For all his right to speak is in the right
Of what he *can* speak to be boldly spoken:
And, therefore, reverently listen'd to.
Whence, if his worth be furnish'd with fair titles

Both to his own, and other men's, good credence,
He cannot too conspicuously show them.
There's nought but such conviction as rejects
All question of it, that what's now to say
Is better worth the saying than all else
By others said before it, justifies
Infraction of that silence which befits
A man in presence of the universe,
The stars above him, and the graves below.
Therefore, my masters, I am bold to speak:
This boldness (which, were it less positive,
Would stand in silence) being, as you see,
The only right which I admit myself
To speak at all. Be mine bold speech, or none.

Oh! I have seen in Professorial Chairs
How much of mock humility, lip-lowliness
Mouthing it thus . . . . . 'The Grace of God forbid
'We should be overbold to lay rough hands
On any man's opinion. For opinions
Are, certes, venerable properties,
And those which show the most decrepitude
Should have the gentlest handling. Yes, good sirs,
We have that sort of courtesy about us,
We would not, flatly, call a fool a fool,
Nor wrong all wrong, nor right entirely right,
Lest we affirm too much. You shall not find us
Of such an overweening arrogance

That we should swear, because we are disposed
To this or that conclusion, that it needs
Must better yours. We think that we are right:
We may be wrong: we doubt you are in error:
You may be right. Civility forbids
Insistance on harsh terms.' Civility
Therefore goes sidling, with a glance asquint
'Twixt true and false, along her slippery road,
Which is the road to Hell, the Home of Lies!

Yet will some wise and moderate good man
Make answer that to no one living soul
Is absolute truth vouchsafed, and this alone
Is absolutely certain. Granted, friend.
Yet he is absolutely right or wrong
That dares, or dares not, follow to the end
And utterly use the whole o' the truth he hath.
For there be many that, in face of Truth
Fear her imperative aspect, and affirm
'This customary falsehood is a thing
More safe than that uncustomary truth,'
Or 'only thus and thus much of the truth
'Is competent of usage,' having not
Within themselves true love of truth, nor yet
The courage of the consequence of thought.
This is the approved philosophy of fools,
Of which you shall hear nothing from my lips,
For half-truths need no teaching from this chair.

The craft of cowardice, the world's vile promptings,
The glare of false authority, the fear
Of exile, prisons, halters, and the rack,
These teach the customary compromise
Twixt true and false; and find in every land
Sufficient school, without the added weight
Of verdict from the lips of men, not vile
By nature, who, tho' none regard their speech,
Must speak undaunted, or not speak at all.
Most men, indeed, believe in something better
Than their own actions: and conciliate
The world, by acting worse than they believe:
And all men even their best actions base
On something worse than is their best Belief:
Yet hope to mollify the scorn of God,
Because their thoughts are better than their acts,
And their beliefs more blameless than their lives.
This needs no teaching. This is the world's wisdom.
But, when the Teacher speaks, he speaks as one
That knows his audience in the universe
Is not of this world only: but perchance
Millions of starry spirits beyond the sun
Pause o'er their planetary toil to lean
And listen to him. If he speak the truth
Truly, his speech is as a trenchant sword
To cut the world asunder to the heart,
And take its stealthy secrets by surprise.
So let him stand up stern, as on a rock,

Like Joshua when he held the sun and moon
In Ajalon and Gibeon, till he ceased
To smite the Amorite before the Lord.
No more ignoble powers, no lesser laws
Can hurt his sacred head whom Nature's own
Eternal and divine supremacies
Safeguard with unseen cohorts to the end.

For wherefore should we call you here, to gaze
In sober earnest, and some shuddering,
Upon this dreadful combat of the gods,
—This conflict of resistant Error arm'd
Against resistless Truth, on all sides round,
Not ended till the world be won or lost?
Why bid you mark severe Minerva there?
Here snaky Typhon,—both at horrible handgrips?
If, to assuage amazement, and restore
The careless satisfaction we were bold
Thus to break-in on with the horrid news,
We lightly whisper,—just when the heart stops
And the veins tighten with the hideous thought
Of what's depending on the deadly issue,—
'Friends, here's no cause to fear yon grisly god,
For all his savage show his claws be clipp'd.
Athene's angry spear can draw no blood,
It being button'd like your fencing foils.
And this tremendous spectacle, which shakes
The ample theatres of Heaven and Hell,

Is but a mock-heroic at the most.'
Ye gods! if this be thus, and only thus,
Why then, I cry i' the name of all men's patience,
You impudent knaves that play the herald's part,
Sound ye your brawling trumpets in our ears
So shrilly? Why do you, unmannerly thus,
Rouse us from slumber, scare us from our business
Of feasting, fooling, and forgetting all things,
To cry the house a-fire? Or why drag hither
Grave men, grown men, grey men, with cares enough,
And griefs enough, and grievances enough,
To try the nerves of those that have the stoutest,
Merely to cheat us of our hard-earned rest
With your preposterous puppetings!

Good friends,
I will not use you thus, I warrant you.
But you shall have hard fighting, and real blows,
Not dealt in vain. For, by the help of God,
We will this day Goliaths more than one
Destroy forever from the Field of Truth.
—If you'll believe me!

—Nay! but neither think,
Because I have put off humility
Before I stept into this Chair of Doctrine,
That therefore I, with idle arrogance
Aspire to hit the stars; revering not

The worth of modest-mindedness in man.
Not so. I have been humble more than most.
Whiles I was yet a learning, I was humble.
Then, my humility was such as suits
A lover when he sues : which I put off
To clothe me with the pride that lover feels
When afterwards, he having won that woo'd,
His love lives in possession. I might tell
Of days and nights of painful patientness
In Padua ; when, a beardless boy, I braved
Sharp winter's biting in a threadbare coat,
And, late and early, trimm'd a lonely lamp
With toilful tendance : sat at all men's feet :
And read from all men's books right reverently :
And lived to learn : and learn'd from all that lived :
And held myself the least of little ones,
Not worthy to be seated at the board,
Grateful to cram what charitable crumbs
Fell from o'erflowing trenchers to my lot ;
While nothing but the daily doled-out crust
(A frail and miserable alms !) appeased
The begging of the body, barely heard.
But love makes warmth and fulness everywhere.
The lover lives on love luxuriously,
And lacks for nothing. O be very sure
That no man will learn anything at all,
Unless he first will learn humility.
The humblest mounts the highest. Who would scale

The skyey Alp must go afoot. The vain
And arrogant man may drive his gilded coach
Across the plain, gazed by the servile crowd,
But, would he mount that mighty eminence,
He must alight, and foot it with slow steps.
Therefore I say . . . Be humble,—to be high!

And I will tell you—I, that have, O friends,
Read many books, and written not a few,
—This is a secret. Tell it not in Gath,
O very reverend Doctors of Sorbonne!
A man may cram his brains with libraries,
And yet know nothing.
Whence comes Knowledge? think!
By reading? No: by thinking on things read.
By seeing? No: by thinking on things seen.
Nor hearing, but by thinking on things heard.
Yet half the first-class writers I have read
Are merely setters forth—not of their own,
But other men's stale thinkings: second-hand
Employers of spent brains! 'Is Thought so easy?
Try!
Take some simple, obvious object here,
And think it. Think the wall.
What! you are silent?
You cannot?
Yet altho' you cannot think
This simple wall that stares you in the face,

You *can* think Plato and Pythagoras,
Zeno, and Aristotle, Epicurus,
Plotinus, Jamblicus, Themistius,
Thales, Parmenides,—and the Lord knows whom.
That is to say, you can think second-hand.
Well then, O friends, now let us learn to think!
Think anything. But only *think*. For, see you?
There's nothing of so singular, nor mean
Condition in this universe, but what
It doth include, and, in a sort, continue
The fact of something greater than itself,
Nay, of the Very Greatest. Nothing is,
But by the having been of something else,
Which something else, the cause of this thing here,
Is, in its turn, the effect of something elsewhere.
Thus we the higher in the lower perceive:
From each obtain intelligence of all:
And find in all the consciousness of each.
For all which is, by reason that it is,
And is itself, not other than itself,
Defines itself; and, being definite,
Must be perceivable at some one point,
If but no more, on which perception acts,
Whether of bodily sense, or mental force.
Away, then, with the indefinite, from thought,
Which is the non-existent. What exists,
Acts; and what acts gives notice of itself
To all existence, acting thus or thus

Conformably to laws that govern all
Existence. Acts are laws : no law, no act.
Therefore, be sure that whatsoever is
Man's thought is competent, if not to know,
At least to know of. And the Infinite
Appears, reported by its parts, to be
The Finite infinitely multiplied,
Extended infinitely every way.

Think, and all things become confederates
To the thought in you. For the Thinking-Power
Is of such pregnant faculty, it imbues
All things, or can from all things extricate,
And stir to answerable activity,
Some portion of the essential consciousness.
Upon the dumb, long inarticulate earth
Descends the gift of prophecy and tongues :
The smallest fact—the last in consequence
Of the supreme procession of events,
—Mere garniture of life's superfluous pomp,
Becomes a willing spy upon the track
Of its more potent predecessor, gone
Most likely in a grand indifference by :
The dust grows dainty with divinity :
The limpet has surmises of the huge
Enormous-back'd sea-violencing-whale :
He, of Behemoth in the days when God
Held colloquies upon the Chaldee plains

With the vex'd Uzzite : the dull-hearted ox
Hath in him legends of his father-race,
Those monstrous and imaginary forms
That frighten'd Adam when the bitten fruit
Turn'd sour between his teeth, and thunder lower'd.
The sandgrain in his dreams, divines the stars.
The very stones are garrulously given
And babble to each other in the moon
The story of the waters that of old
Roll'd Noë's ark on Ararat. Perchance
The poising of a pebble that a child
Sends from his sling in swift parabola,
Interprets in a tongue that's yet to learn
The fiat that gave motion to the stars.
So that this volatile fluid of the brain
This flux of thought, like streams compell'd to seek
The level of their sources, flowing forth
No matter by what channels, thro' what fields,
Is by each course constrain'd towards the height
From whence it issued, and mounts up to God.

Ha ! there you smile, and bring your faces all
To bear on mine ; like men who, unawares,
And by a sudden happy chance, detect
In some familiar object, grown a blank
By being look'd at carelessly too often,
A novel feature, not before divulged.
Why, this is well. And, since we all are here

To use our wits, friends, let us use them sharply
And to some purpose: not as your mere swords
Of ceremony, shut up safe in velvet,
Tawdry and tedious appendages,
Put on for show, and put aside for comfort!
I see you take my humour by this time.
Good! and your faces brighten, and your eyes
Glitter, as stars do in a good sharp wind.
Sharp? why, what else should be the atmosphere
Of vigorous spirits?

You believe me, friends?
You *do* believe me!

Ay, I always felt
That I should find in France my own compeers,
The finest and most eager spirits of men!
Some guiding angel drew me in my dreams
To choose this land for my abiding home.
I loved you ere I knew you: know you now,
And, having known you, love you better still.
Gather, then, close about me, all of you!
You, there, bright youth with sunbeams in your hair,
And you, grave sir, with eyes like icicles,
Come round me, one and all . . . close! closer still!
Let not a word escape!

We will discourse
This day of the Eternal Providence.
Clap all your pens to paper, and write down:—

'*Amphitheatrum Providentiæ*
Eternæ christiano-physicum,
Divino-magicum, astrologico-
Catholicum; adversus veteres
Philosophos, peripatetico̊s,
Epicureos, atheos, stoicos.'

Good! Have you written? Now attend.

We thus
Begin with the Beginning. Which is God.

JOHN PETER CARAFA.

(HONORES MUTANT MORES.)

A.D. 15—.

["Quelle . . . che sono fatti per amministrare le cose spirituali non hanno bisogno di niente."—*Letters of Cardinal Carafa. Caracciolo MSS.* "Tal era il furore e la cupidigia dei Carafa, che pareva fossero tornati i tempi dei Borgia."—*Botta, Storia di Italia*, lib. ix. p. 226.]

1.

JOHN PETER, Count of Madalone, son
Of Count John Anthony Carafa, fled
From Rome, indignant at the evil done
By wolves that on the fold of Christ were fed :

2.

And gave himself to Poverty and God :
And with firm footstep, pure, severe, and sad,
The untrodden paths of abnegation trod,
Poor amidst wealth, and grieved by evil glad.

3.

The fame of his fair life, and fervid faith,
  Grew with the growing evil of the time,
And sounded as the archangelic breath,
  Blown thro' Heaven's trump, in challenge to Earth's crime.

4.

The Holy Father of the Faithful thought
  'My counsellor shall be this saintly man,
As God is his:' and many a time besought
  John Peter's presence at the Vatican.

5.

But to the sinful city he had fled
  With feet that, wing'd by indignation, shook
Rome's dust away, the self-made exile said
  'The spirit that is within me will not brook

6.

'To breathe the breath of thy polluted air.'
  Howbeit, when God's Viceregent sent from Rome
Command to him to come, in place of prayer,
  Loyal to his high lord, he groan'd 'I come.'

7.

And, being at Rome, to one that loved him,—there
  He wrote . . . 'In all this evil lump no leaven
'Is left: but it is evil everywhere:
  And here man's heart fears neither Hell nor Heaven.

8.

'My sister, I have lived to loathe this life,
And call on Death to lead my spirit home.
Death hears me not. God's will prolongs the strife
My sad soul wages with the sins of Rome.' *

9.

Sometimes the high hand of His Holiness
Doth, for the ennobling of the Church, dispense
Honours whereby a good man's lowliness
Is raised into a great man's Eminence :

10.

But, in the Church's pious customs never
(Nor the traditions, nor the usages
Of immemorial Rome, wherein forever
As the tradition so the usage is)

11.

Prescription, precedent, or practice show'd
That, if the head of its recipient
Were housed in Rome, to the man's own abode
A scarlet hat might properly be sent.†

* Letters to his Sister: selected by M. Charles de Sam·n from the MS. collection of the Duke of Policastro.

† "Jamais Pape n'avait envoyé la barrette à un prélat présent à Rome'. . . . . "Tel était la pauvreté du nouveau Cardinal qu'il n'y avait

12.

This pauper Priest was made a Cardinal :
The Pope's own envoy bore the scarlet hat
To his poor house : and found not wherewithal,
(Save the one stool where its lone inmate sat)

13.

In that bare lodge, that wanted all save worth,
To place the gift : whose stern recipient gazed
Ungladden'd, and from thankless doors drave forth
The messenger unmonied and amazed.

14.

At length one Pope, and then another, died :
And Cardinal Carafa, after these,
Became a Pope, himself. The whole world cried
'Tis well ! for he is worthy of the keys.'

15.

Simple, austere, men knew him. Pure his name,
And praised his virtues. Nobly born was he,
Yet not ignobly known. His ample fame
Was spotless. Worthier Pope there could not be.

dans sa petite chambre de meuble convenable pour y poser la barrette, et qu'il n'avait rien à offrir à l'envoyé du Pape chargé de la lui remettre. Tout Rome en parlait et s'en etonnait."—*Caracciolo MS.*

16.

'The luxury of the new Pope's table' (writes*
A Venice envoy to the Vatican)
'Is more than may be dream'd of. All delights
With all magnificences this proud man

17.

'Mingles in one. The daintiest viands grace
The costliest dishes, the most sumptuous wines
From the most gorgeous goblets flow to chase
Care from the banquet where his splendour shines:

18.

'Good cheer he loves: and lustily he eats
And deep he drinks: right royal is his tone!
The mightiest monarchs of the world he treats
As clots of common dust beneath his throne:

19.

'His daily drink is butts of burning black
Fierce Naples wine, and cups of Malvoisie.
Methinks his belly is but a Bacchus' sack.
And his least meal meats five and twenty be.

* Relazione di Bernardo Navigero.

20.

'Wondrous his wealth is. Of his noble birth
So proud is he, and of his present state,
That even as tho' he scorn'd to tread on earth
Is the high going of his haughty gait.

21.

'His nephews are the richest lords in Rome.
And, for the greatness of the power they have,
Many there be that flatter them, and some
That in dark wishes dig them a deep grave.'

22.

'Dame History is so old, she knows not well
Present from Past. She loves to say her say
Till it is stale, and the same story tell
To-morrow as she told it yesterday.

PICAROONS.

1593.

1.

WHO gallops by night, when the owl is about?
O who, fellows, who but the bold Picaroon?
Short shrift for the lord, and a rope for the lout,
And 'tis merry to ride by the light of the moon,
With hey, fellows, hey!

2.

The Provost of Flanders look'd woeful to see
(With hey, fellows, hey for the bold Picaroon!)
Black Jack, his own knave, in the hollow oak tree
Roasting alive by the light of the moon,
With hey, fellows, hey!

3.

Be it Dutchman or Spaniard, all fowl is fair game:
Belted Flanders Militiaman: Brabant Dragoon:
Where's the jack knave o' them fears not the name
O' the roaming night-rider, the bold Picaroon?
And hey, fellows, hey!

CHRISTIAN, THE DOL-HARTZOG.

(SO CALLED FROM HIS FURIOUS BEHAVIOUR.)

1660.

CHRISTIAN, Duke of Brunswick, and Bishop of Halberstadt,
For a token of love, wore a lady's glove, in the loop of his riding-hat.
For he had seen the Bohemian Queen in England; and, they say,
In the sole soft part of his rock-rough heart, slept the memory of that day.
For Christian, the Dol-Hartzog, was half a brute at the best,
With but little space for a lady's face to lie and be loved in his breast.
Yet he may have loved well, for he hated well (tho' he showed his hate like a beast,
With tooth and claw), and the thing of things that he hated most was a priest.
He maul'd the monk, and flay'd the friar, nor left the abbot a rag,

And "*Gottes Freund and Pfaffern Feind*," was the boast on his battle flag.
Yet he worshipt God in his own wild way—as a beast might worship too—
Simply by thoroughly doing the work which God had set him to do:
With never a *Pater noster* said, never a candle burn'd,
And never a *pleni gratia*, for any good gift return'd.
Worship no better than any beast's! yet with reverence, too, to spare,
Of its own dumb kind, in the silent mind, for what God made gentle and fair.
At least, from one touch I argue as much in this wild man of Halberstadt,
Since, for token of love, a pure lady's glove he wore in his riding-hat.

Christian, the Dol-Hartzog, came riding to Paderborn;
And his men were dropping for lack of bread, and his horses for lack of corn.
Not a crown-piece in the coffer, either bread or corn to buy!
"What shall we do, Duke Christian?" "Anything, friends, but die!"
"The Saints us save," saith some one, "for we are weary and faint."
"'Sdeath! and so they shall, good fellows! Who is the Paderborn Saint?"

"The Paderborn Saint is the Saint Liboire; and his image stands by itself
As large as life in the church, all cover'd with jewels and pelf."
"The Saint Liboire is a saint of saints, for he to our pious wishes
Shall accord a final miracle in the way of the loaves and fishes!
Faith! since he hath jewels, and since he hath pelf, he shall buy us both bread and corn,
And if ever I swear by a saint, it shall be by the Saint of Paderborn."

Christian, the Dol-Hartzog, rode on into Munster town,
There, in the great Cathedral (greater for their renown!)
Carven in silver, and cover'd with gold (truly a glorious band!)
Round the altar, all in a row, the Twelve Apostles stand.
Christian, the Dol-Hartzog, call'd his captains of war—
"We will visit these Twelve Apostles, and see how their worships are,"
Then they all went clanking together (godless knaves as they were)
Over the sacred flintstones, up to the altar stair:
Never a *De profundis* was heard, never an anthem sung,
But where, thro' great glooms, 'twixt the solemn tombs, those iron footsteps rung,

Each priest, like a ghost, from that grizzly host, patter'd off
o'er the pavement stone,
And the iron men and the silver saints stood face to face and
alone.
To that Sacred Dozen, thro' a silence frozen, strode the wild
man of Halberstadt,
As when Brennus the Gaul stalkt into the hall where the
Roman senators sat.
The Duke loves little speaking; but he made, that day, a
speech
To those Twelve Apostles, as pregnant as any the preacher
can preach;
For, "You Twelve Apostles," said he, "for many a year and
a day
"How is it that you have dared your Master to disobey—
Who bade you '*ite per orbem*,' go about in the world where
ye can,
From city to city for ever, succouring every man?
But you, yet unmoved by the mandate, you slothful and
rascally crew!
Stand there stock-still, letting others be stript to give suc-
cour to you.
Therefore, about your business! down instantly all, and dis-
perse!
Comfort the needy! circulate freely! profit the uni-
verse!
The better to serve which purpose, divinely ordain'd from of
old,

I hereby will and command both ye and your ill-gotten gold
To assume the shape of Rix-thalers!"

The Apostles had nothing to say,
As it seems, in defence of themselves. They at least were obliged to obey.
At dawn they were down from their niches; ere night on their mission they sped;
And the broken were bound up and heal'd, and the hungry were speedily fed.

This way Duke Christian affirm'd, little heeding Apostles or Priests,
That the first great need of a man is—*to feed:* after the fashion of beasts!
But, since even the beasts must work, Duke Christian thought, I suspect,
If Apostles are made to work also, Apostles mustn't object.

ELISABETTA SIRANI.*

1665.

Just to begin,—and end! so much,—no more!
To touch upon the very point at last
Where life should cling: to feel the solid shore
Safe; where, the seething sea's strong toil o'erpast,
Peace seem'd appointed; then, with all the store
Half-undivulged of the glean'd ocean cast,
Like a discouraged wave's, on the bleak strand,
Where what appear'd some temple (whose glad Priest
To gather ocean's sparkling gift should stand,
Bidding the wearied wave, from toil releast,
Sleep in the marble harbours bathed with bland
And quiet sunshine, flowing from full east
Among the laurels) proves the dull blind rock's
Fantastic front,—to die, a disallow'd,
Dasht purpose: which the scornful shore-cliff mocks,
Even as it sinks; and all its wealth bestow'd

* Suggested by Mr. T. A. Trollope's charming Biography; which completely disproves the old story of the poisoning.

In vain,—mere food to feed, perchance, stray flocks
Of the coarse sea-gull! weaving its own shroud
Of idle foam, swift ceasing to be seen!
—— Sad, sad, my father! . . . yet it comes to this.
For I am dying. All that might have been—
That must have been! . . . the days, so hard to miss,
So sure to come! . . . eyes, lips, that seem'd to lean
In on me at my work, and almost kiss
The curls bow'd o'er it, . . . lost! Oh, never doubt
I should have lived to know them all again,
And from the crowd of praisers single out
For special love those forms beheld so plain
Beforehand. When my pictures, borne about
Bologna, to the church doors, led their train
Of kindling faces, turn'd, as by they go,
Up to these windows,—standing at your side
Unseen, to see them, I (be sure!) should know
And welcome back those eyes and lips, descried
Long since in fancy: for I loved them so,
And so believed them! Think! . . . Bologna's pride
My paintings! . . . Guido Reni's mantle mine . . .
And I, the maiden artist, prized among
The masters, . . . ah, that dream was too divine
For earth to realize! I die so young,
All this escapes me! God, the gift be Thine,
Not man's, then . . . better so! That throbbing throng
Of human faces fades out fast. Even yours,
Belovèd ones, the inexorable Fate

(For all our vow'd affections !) scarce endures
About me. Must I go, then, desolate
Out from among you ? Nay, my work ensures
Fit guerdon somewhere,—tho' the gift must wait !
Had I lived longer, life would sure have set
Earth's gift of fame in safety. But I die.
Death must make safe the heavenly guerdon yet.
I trusted time for immortality,—
There was my error ! Father, never let
Doubt of reward confuse my memory !
Besides,—I have done much : and what is done
Is well done. All my heart conceived, my hand
Made fast . . . mild martyr, saint, and weeping nun,
And truncheon'd prince, and warrior with bold brand,
Yet keep my life upon them ;—as the sun,
Tho' fallen below the limits of the land,
Still sees on every form of purple cloud
His painted presence.

Flaring August's here,
September's coming ! Summer's broider'd shroud
Is borne away in triumph by the year :
Red Autumn drops, from all his branches bow'd,
His careless wealth upon the costly bier.
We must be cheerful. Set the casement wide.
One last look o'er the places I have loved,
One last long look ! . . . Bologna, O my pride
Among thy palaced streets ! The days have moved

Pleasantly o'er us. What has been denied
To our endeavour? Life goes unreproved.
To make the best of all things, is the best
Of all means to be happy. This I know,
But cannot phrase it finely. The night's rest
The day's toil sweetens. Flowers are warm'd by snow.
All's well God wills. Work out this grief. Joy's zest
Itself is salted with a taste of woe.
There's nothing comes to us may not be borne,
Except a too great happiness. But this
Comes rarely. Tho' I know that you will mourn
The little maiden helpmate you must miss,
Thanks be to God, I leave you not forlorn.
There should be comfort in this dying kiss.
Let Barbara keep my colours for herself.
I'm sorry that Lucia went away
In some unkindness. 'Twas a cheerful elf!
Send her my scarlet ribands, mother; say
I thought of her. My palette's on the shelf,
Surprised, no doubt, at such long holiday.
In the south window, on the easel, stands
My picture for the Empress Eleänore,
Still wanting some few touches, these weak hands
Must leave to others. Yet there's time before
The year ends. And the Empress' own commands
You'll find in writing. Barbara's brush is more
Like mine than Anna's; let her finish it.
Oh, . . . and there's 'Maso our poor fisherman!

You'll find my work done for him : something fit
To hang among his nets : you liked the plan
My fancy took to please our friend's dull wit,
Scarce brighter than his old tin fishing can. . . .
St. Margaret, stately as a ship full sail,
Leading a dragon by an azure band ;
The ribbon flutters gaily in the gale :
The monster follows the Saint's guiding hand,
Wrinkled to one grim smile from head to tail :
For in his horny hide his heart grows bland.
—— Where are you, dear ones ? . . .

'Tis the dull, faint chill,
Which soon will shrivel into burning pain !
Dear brother, sisters, father, mother—still
Stand near me ! While your faces fixt remain
Within my sense, vague fears of unknown ill
Are softly crowded out, . . . and yet, 'tis vain !
Greet Giulio Banzi ; greet Antonio ; greet
Bartolomeo, kindly. When I'm gone,
And in the school-room, as of old, you meet,
— Ah, yes ! you'll miss a certain merry tone,
A cheerful face, a smile that should complete
The vague place in the household picture grown
To an aspect so familiar, it seems strange
That aught should alter there. Mere life, at least,
Could not have brought the shadow of a change
Across it. Safely the warm years encreast

Among us. I have never sought to range
From our small table at earth's general feast,
To higher places: never loved but you,
Dear family of friends, except my art:
Nor any form save those my pencil drew
E'er quiver'd in the quiet of my heart.
I die a maiden to Madonna true,
And would have so continued. . . . There, the smart,
The pang, the faintness! . . .

Ever, as I lie
Here, with the Autumn sunset on my face,
And heavy in my curls (whilst it, and I,
Together, slipping softly from the place
We play'd in, pensively prepare to die)
A low warm humming simmers in my ears,
—Old summer afternoons! faint fragments rise
Out of my broken life . . . at times appears
Madonna, like a moon in mellow skies:
The three Fates with the spindle and the shears:
The Grand Duke Cosmo with the Destinies:
St. Margaret with her dragon: fitful cheers
Along the Via Urbana come and go:
Bologna with her towers! . . . Then all grows dim,
And shapes itself anew, softly and slow,
To cloister'd glooms thro' which the silver hymn
Eludes the sensitive silence; whilst below
The south-west window, just one single, slim,

And sleepy sunbeam, powders with waved gold
A lane of gleamy mist along the gloom,
Whereby to find its way, thro' manifold
Magnificence, to Guido Reni's tomb,
Which set in steadfast splendour, I behold.
And all the while, I scent the incense fume,
Till dizzy grows the brain, and dark the eye
Beneath the eyelid. When the end is come,
There, by his tomb (our master's) let me lie,
Somewhere, not too far off; beneath the dome
Of our own Lady of the Rosary:
Safe, where old friends will pass; and still near home!

RICHELIEU.

I.

THE POETS.

1.

ALL she-creatures that exist
Power can subdue,
Save the Muse,—that could resist
Cardinal Richelieu.

2.

He the War of Thirty Years
With his right hand led:
Struck the turbulent French peers,
With his left hand, dead.

3.

Mad-dog Luther loosed to bite
Emperor Charles and Rome:
But the Huguenots held tight,
Kennel-chain'd, at home.

4.

Greatest man of many great!
When to see him came
The Queen Mother, forced to wait,
Stood the royal dame:

5.

Round him he, with haughty mien
Rome's proud purple wrapp'd:
Trembling stood the bare-head Queen:
Richelieu sat capp'd.

6.

Only little poets were
Gombault, Desmarets,
Colletet, and Boisrobert:
Yet, whenever they

7.

Came to see the Cardinal,
Each kept on his hat.
Proud as princes, one and all,
These small poets sat:

8.

And, while they in critic mood
Did his rhymes review,
Trembling and bare-headed stood
Cardinal Richelieu.

II.

THE THREE ESTATES.

1.

THE Cardinal to the Clergy cried
"Six millions for the State!"
The Archbishop of Sens replied
"God save the King! the great
And ancient rule hath been alway
That for the Public Good
The Clergy pray, the People pay,
The Nobles give their blood."

2.

'Good!' said the Spirit of the Age,
'Give and take is a doctrine sage.'

3.

So, when the Royal Power had need
Of more than priestly prayer,
The Nobles for the Throne did bleed:
And then the Nobles were
The masters. When the Royal Power
Said to the People 'Pay!'
It was their dower that, from that hour,
The masters rested they.

4.

'Good!' saith the Spirit of the Age,
'Give and take is a doctrine sage.'

III.

WALLENSTEIN'S DEATH.

WHEN Richelieu learn'd that Wallenstein was dead,
His thin face sharpen'd to an edge. He said
"Soon as the great tree falls, the rabble run
To strip him of his branches one by one."

THE DAUPHIN.

A PALACE here, a People there,
Face to face, i' the rainy air:
For the rain is raining heavily,
And the sick day shutting a bloodshot eye.
The People, nowhere a while ago,
Now here, now there, now everywhere.
And, of all in the Palace, none doth know
Where the People may be, ere is done
This last of two disastrous days,
Now waning fast, with watery rays.
Quick, Fancy! ere its light be gone,
From out of the many 'tis darkening on
Save me a single face. This one.

Broider'd of satin, as best befits,
Is the gilded chair where the urchin sits,
Whose grandsires all earth's greatest were
In grandeur, when the grand were great.

For the childhood of this child is heir
To monarchy's old age.

The late
Sunbeam, now sinking in his hair
(Weary of strife with a rainy sky)
Faintly, solemnly, lingers there
With a sorrowful glory, soon to die:
As all things must, some day, whene'er
Time disavows them: Time knows why.

O'er kingdoms twain thou wert born to reign,
Bourbon child of the Hapsburg mother!
Life's fairest, one: and earth's, the other:
France, and Youth. Of all the train
Of those the wondering world admires,
Lords and Ladies, Knights and Squires,
Long-robed Senator severe,
Royal Duke, and Princely Peer,
—They whose heads be Heads of France,
To whom, with a sullen countenance,
Hungry hundreds crook the knee,
None but boweth the head to thee,
Little child! Whose face is one
Of a group that all are gone.

For, since thou, O child, didst flee,
Who knows where? from human sight;

Never child, kingborn, like thee,
Hath been born to absolute right:
Sons of kings no more can be
Guaranteed, as thou wert then,
Of the servitude of men.

Hearest thou the sounds outside?
Hearest thou the sounds within?
In the neighbouring chamber Pride
Stoops, in colloquy with Fear:
Mounier's loyal cares begin:
Prudence plucks at Lafayette:
Orleans with sulky stride
Is philosophising yet:
Chartres has Louis by the ear;
Necker rubs a ruminant chin.
Outside in the twilight drear
Swells the ominous surly din.

See! the child is playing now
With his sister's silky tresses:
To whose infantine white brow
Lips as white a mother presses.
Are not children safe from harm,
Circled by a mother's arm?

In the chair where sits the child
Smiling, long since sat and smiled

Him men named the 'Grand Monarque.'
Ah, the light is fading dark!
Thro' the palace windows wide
What is still so dim descried
In the pale persistent rain?

Is the deluge back again?
And what wreckt world's groaning ark
There emits its monstrous train
To new-people earth with pain?
Men or beasts? What are they? Mark!
Seest thou? hear'st thou, little child?
Haggard faces: women wild:
Men red-handed, blood-defiled:
Heroism, and Hope, and Hate,
Hunger, Horror, Wrath, and Crime,
Mingling in the march of Fate,
Life's grotesque with Love's sublime:
Ragged wretches grim and stark,
Smiling as they never smiled
Till this moment: jaw of shark
Gaping at a drowning ship:
Eye of tiger: lion's grip:
Stormy starvelings, smutcht and soil'd,
Thick thro' garden, court, and park,
Round that palace terrace-piled,
Teeming, tossing, trampling . . . Hark!
First a growl, and then a howl,

Voice of a vast tormented soul,
And then a shrill heart-breaking bark,
And now an immense murtherous roar,
Nearer, drearer, more and more,—
The famisht wild beast's roar for bread!
Suddenly the child's hand ceased
Its sport among the tiny tresses
Of the little golden head
Backward bent to its caresses;
All those tumbled curls released;
While the pouting child-lips said
'MOTHER, I AM HUNGRY!'

Cry
Of the Poor man's child, suppressed
In a People's starving breast,
For so many wicked years!
Cry, no law could longer smother
In the lawless lifeless past!
By what strange revenge of chance
Didst thou thus ascend so high,
From what depths of woe upcast,
As to smite the heart of a mother,
Heard in the unwilling ears
Of a listening Queen of France,
From a Dauphin's lips at last?

END OF BOOK VIII.

BOOK IX.

HERE AND THERE.

ROMANCES AND BALLADS.

" L'histoire ne commence, et ne finit, nulle part."—Louis Blanc.

ATLANTIS.

1.

To greet the young Atlantis of the West
Strange gifts the Monarchs of the Old World sent:
The sighings of the hearts of their opprest,
Howlings and hungers of their hungriest,
And many a trampled truth, and foil'd intent,
And pining hope erewhile in prison pent,
Half-starving bodies and sore-stricken souls,
And every wretchedness the deep unrest
That shakes the sad shores of the Old World rolls
Ever and anon to drown in gulfs unguest,
—The wrecks of Time! And all these ruin'd things
The Witch-Queen of the Oceanides
Shaped into glorious forms of crownèd kings;
And to their sorrows gave she sovereignties
Upon the frontiers of the Future Time;
Where they sit throned, judging the Old World's crime.

2.

Yet did the Old World plague her on this wise:

Into the cradle of her childhood's sleep
It dropt a serpent's egg. And, ere her eyes
Were open'd, forth did the hatch'd reptile creep,
And breed a venomous brood of tyrannies,
Sloths, usurpations, ignominies, lies :
Which her yet-infant force, by fear, did keep
Subservient to their wicked witcheries.
These, when she stronger wax'd, and strove to rise
And set her foot upon the viperous heap
Of their infernal progeny, were wise
In the old wisdom of their Serpent Sire,
And, taught by Satan, tempted her desire
Of Power—to palter and to compromise
With Profit—by their poison-pouches brew'd
From human blood in human flesh black-hued
So that the Angel in her droopt his wing,
And sank into a sick and sullen swound ;
And Gold was made her God, and Cain her King,
And Crime the crown wherewith her head was crown'd.
Until her reptile rulers wax'd secure
Of Sin's success, and pass'd the bitter bound
Of what God's patience suffers man to' endure ;
Spat on the cheek their kiss had left impure,
Beat her, and left her bare to her distress.
But, hardier than the hooted lioness
When the net breaks,—stern mother of strong times,
She leapt to lordly life, and roll'd around
The lustrous orbs of her indignant scorn,

And rent her coward compact with the crimes
Of the Old World; which, deeming her forlorn
In that surpassing pang wherein she found
Surpassing strength, glad of man's loss stood by,
With spleenful sneer, and supercilious eye,
Scribbling on time's loose sands with crooked staff
Anticipations of her epitaph.
For, fool'd by its own wishful hate, it deem'd
Those pangs of her transcendent Second-Birth
To be the desperate death-throes of what seem'd
Her last wild hour. And the old kings o' the earth
Mock'd with their pointed sceptres, and made mirth.

3.

Then, in the dark of her shaked star's eclipse,
She caught and clung to that Omnipotent Hand
Which whoso holds stands fast, nor ever slips
Or strays, tho' darkness be on sea and land.
And Strength was given to her from Heaven, when Power
Proffer'd by Hell she spurn'd: strength to withstand
And stand. In that apocalyptic hour
Her might was inexhaustible by man,
(Even as the mythic horn, which ever flow'd,
Because the illimitable ocean
Forever at one end thereof abode)
For thro' her frame those heavenly forces ran
Whose fountain-head is the Eternal God.
Her fervid foot with fiery purpose shod

(Forged by strong Faith) the formidable field
Of frenzied Opposition firmly trod ;
Tho' oft repulsed, returning oft, to yield
Of Freedom's heritage no hallow'd sod :
Nor ever drowsed she on her battle shield,
Till her supreme spear, red with traitorous blood,
Had slain the Serpent and his rebel brood.

4.

A Queen she is, tho' round her forehead shines
No semblance of the circlet of a crown ;
Save what rare promise of rich sunrise twines
In her wild hair from splendours of its own.
High in the heaven of human hope her throne
Rises remote from us, whose orb declines
Down the dark slope of time,—remote and lone
In solitary light, as when afar
A crimson cloud, the pent sun's stormy zone,
Brightens the welkin ; and belated signs
Are setting, and a sudden breeze is blown
About the shuddering stillness of the dawn :
Some sleep a heavy sleep, with curtain drawn
And shutter fast against whatever beams
Visit the dark ; and unto them dawn's star
Is even as tho' it were not : some there are
That see and fear it ; unto whom it seems
A portent prophesying woeful war,
And ruin to the world whereon it gleams,

The falling of long-fixèd faiths, the jar
Of jostled thrones, the flowing forth of streams
Whose fury Law's old limitary bar
Shall stem no more, the unsoldering of old schemes,
And foundering of old fabrics, splint and spar,
And trampling of tumultuary extremes
Which man's mild golden middle way shall mar:
But some, tho' few, that dream'd of it in dreams
And waked, believing, with unwearied eyes
To watch for the illumining of dark skies,
What time the skies were darkest, hail the sight
As haply herald of a long-wisht light.

5.

Little she heeds our welcome or our scorn.
The title-deeds of her immense command
She sues not from the signing of our hand.
Great Nature sign'd them when her child was born.
Great Nature guards them. They shall not be torn
From Nature's grasp. The inviolable land
Into whose spacious lap her affluent horn
Showers more wealth than e'er the unvalued sweat
Of serf and villain did of old beget
From the wrong'd earth, to appease the discontent
Of murtherous monarchies whose names are yet
On palaces and temples opulent,
She holds by Nature's, not by our, consent.
Her foot is on the Serpent she hath slain.

The wound is in her bosom, where he bit.
The red blood blossoms, as it drips from it,
To flowers that flourish best on battle plain;
Which, being pluckt, for sudden cures are fit;
Whose biting juices purge out many a stain.
Her cheek is flusht with fervour, not with pain.
Her eyes are beacon lights by Freedom lit.
And her strong forehead is severely knit
By somewhat of a newly-learn'd disdain
For the much mockery of our little wit.
About the fillet of her brows is writ
HUMANITY—sad word, oft sigh'd in vain
By weary lips of wretches doom'd to sit
Counting the links of Custom's cruel chain:
But on those lips of hers the sound thereof
Is even as tho' all laughters that had lain,
(Frozen by old Unwisdom's wintry scoff)
Long mute in Nature's mighty heart, leapt free
To join a new world's general jubilee.

6.

We, clinging to the present, in our fear
To front the future, miss the joy of both.
We praise the past, with praises insincere,
For what its loudest eulogists are loth
To emulate; whose supercilious sloth
Plays off, with hollow commendations drear,
The virtues and the valours that have ceased

To shape the conduct of mankind's career
Against whatever lives in living breast
Of virtue and of valour, striving *here*,
And striving *now*, to help man's imminent need,
And honour passèd worth by present deed.
We chuckle when they fall, who fight—or sink,
Who soar—or stumble, who strain forward still.
We know not what to do, nor what to think,
Save only to do nothing, and think ill
Of all things done. We peep about the brink
Of the full-flowing river of time, until
Some waning moon's wan influence, to fulfil
Our feeble hope, do chance to suck and shrink
The torrent wave we have not strength nor skill
Either to pass, or turn what way we will.
The winds of change afflict us. What to-day
We tether tight to-morrow whirls away.
That which our faith affirms our fear denies.
Our conscience cries to our convenience Nay.
The tides of things are flowing otherwise
Than with their wills on whom our doubt relies.
Their prophesyings Fate's fierce facts gainsay,
And Time's swift wisdom their slow wit belies,
Whose master is unmerciful surprise,
And their sad task, impossible delay.

7.

Therefore the ardours and the heats, that here

No flames enkindle from our altars cold,
The hopes which our inhospitable fear
Hoots into houseless space,—the manifold
Enthusiasms, Love sends forth to cheer
Each lusty champion that gives battle bold
In his glad cause,—the meanings and the aims
That move the mighty disc of Circumstance,
And that strong demiurgic faith, that frames
Foundations deeper than the drifts of chance,
Escape us—in the striving of the soul
Of poets, and the thinking of the thought
Of sages, and the yearning to its goal
Of that endeavouring Impulse, which hath brought
All things to what they are, nor pauses ever
Halfway to what they shall be ; whose endeavour
Undoes our deedless doings. And all these
Are made the servants of the Destinies
Which, being our despots, are her ministers ;
Who dips in the dim light of setting suns
The spacious skirts of that vast robe of hers
That widens ever in the wondrous West :
But on her sceptre shines the morning star,
Whereto she sings mysterious orisons.
In her large lap Jove's Bird hath built his nest ;
And the great Ocean Stream orbicular
Goeth about to girdle her strong breast,
Whereto the nurseling hopes of Time are prest.

8.

A mightier wrong than the remorseless Greek,
In the sad decad of the woes of Troy,
Revenged what time he did his angers wreak
On grey-hair'd Priam and his Phrygian boy,
A loftier scorn than that of Thetis' son,
With nobler sword, redress'd on fiercer field:
A fairer prize than Helen's beauty won;
A haughtier foe than Hector forced to yield;
And left a theme, for larger Iliads fit
Than Homer sung, in legends yet unwrit.

9.

Then came the Old World's monarchs; who had sought
(Hoping that Hell might over Heaven prevail)
To crown the infernal foe wherewith she fought,
What time the fight was dubious,—crying, 'All hail
'Most sovereign lady! since thou didst not fail
In battle such as never was before,
Since when the Titans did the Gods assail.
For now thou art the Goddess we adore,
(Long vow'd to lift not whatsoever veil
Her Godhood wears) whose title is SUCCESS.
Therefore be witness of our willingness
To give thee welcome!'
But she answer'd not:
Who then was musing on man's faith in what
Her faith had won for man—Futurity.

That war was not as theirs, earth's anarchs old,
Mere barbarous battle for most brutal gain,
The slave's affliction and the tyrant's joy,
The making, not the breaking, of the chain
Which Hell's Ambition in his hand doth hold :
—But, for all human faith in human worth ;
For man's most outraged hope in heavenly things ;
For those high aspirations that go forth,
The holy souls of human sufferings,
To gladden God ; for our afflicted Earth
And our forgotten Heaven ; for whatsoe'er
Redeems the Past, making the Future fair,
The Present blameless ; for the black man's flesh,
The white man's spirit ; for Freedom, fluttering,
Caught in her first flight by the fowler's mesh,
With sullied feather and with broken wing ;
For all sublime Ideas that cry to God,
Buried alive beneath earth's clumsy clod
Of sullen fact ; and every noble thought ;
—For these, not only for herself, she fought !
And theirs her victory is, not hers alone :
For they to help her in the conflict wrought.
Where'er the oppressor trembles at the groan
Of the opprest ; wherever Truth is taught
To challenge Falsehood with undaunted tone ;
Wherever a slave is made into a man,
And that man's flesh and blood are made his own ;
Where what a poet dreams a people can

Resolve to achieve ; wherever what hath been
A wish—scarce even a hope—in ages gone,
Begins to be a certainty clear-seen ;
Wherever Justice widens Freedom's span ;
Wherever right for all is wrong to none,
And fear in many is not force in one ;
Wherever life assumes a lovelier mien ;
Wherever Conscience is crown'd Custom's Queen ;
Wherever good believed is good begun ;
—The everlasting trophies she hath won
Shall stand unshaken by the storms of time,
Deep as man's heart, and as man's hope sublime.

MISERY.

I.

'T WAS neither day nor night, but both together
Mix'd in a muddy smudge of London weather,
And the dull pouring of perpetual
Dim rain was vague, and vast, and over all.

She stray'd on thro' the rain, and thro' the mud,
That did the slop-fed filmy city flood,
Meekly unmindful as are wretches, who,
Accustom'd to discomfortings, pursue
Their paths scarce conscious of the more or less
Of misery mingled with each day's distress.
Albeit the ghostly rag, too thin to call
Even the bodily remnant of a shawl,
(Mere heaps of holes to one another stitch'd)
That tightly was about her shoulders twitch'd,
As, at each step, the fretful cough, in vain
By its vext victim check'd, broke loose again,
And shiver'd thro' it, dripping drop by drop,

Contrived the flaccid petticoat to sop
With the chill surcharge of its oozy welt.

The mud was everywhere. It seem'd to melt
Out of the grimy houses, trickling down
Those brick-work blocks that at each other frown,
Unsociable, tho' squeezed and jamm'd so close
Together; all monotonously morose,
And claiming each, behind his iron rail,
The smug importance of a private jail.
It seem'd to stuff the blurr'd and spongy sky;
To clog the slimy streets; and fiercely try
To climb the doorsteps; blind with spatter'd filth
The dismal lamps; and spew out its sick spilth
At unawares, from hidingplaces, known
In dark street-corners to its spite alone.
She stray'd on thro' the mud: 'twas nothing new:
And thro' the rain—the rain? it was mud too!
The woman still was young, and Nature meant,
Doubtless, she should be fair; but that intent
Hunger, in haste, had marr'd, or toil, or both.
There was no colour in the quiet mouth,
Nor fulness; yet it had a ghostly grace
Pathetically pale. The thin young face
Was interpenetrated tenderly
With soft significance. The warm brown eye,
And warm brown hair, had gentle gleams. Perchance
Those gracious tricks of gesture and of glance,

Those dear and innocent arts,—a woman's ways
Of wearing pretty looks, and winning praise,
—The pleasantness of pleasing, and the skill,
Were native to this woman,—woman still,
Tho' woman wither'd. There's a last degrée
Of misery that is sexless wholly. She
Was yet what ye are, mothers, sisters, wives,
That are so sweet and lovely in our lives ;—
A woman still, for all her wither'd look,
Even as a faded flower in a book
Is still a flower.

II.

Dark darker grows. The lamps
Of London, flaring thro' the foggy damps,
Glare up and down the grey streets ghostily,
And the long roaring of loud wheels rolls by.
The huge hump-shoulder'd bridge is reach'd. She stops.
The shadowy stream beneath it slides and drops
With sulky sound between the arches old.

She eye'd it from the parapet. The cold
Clung to her, creeping up the creepy stream.
The enormous city, like a madman's dream,
Full of strange hummings and unnatural glare,
Beat on her brain. Some Tempter whisper'd

'There,

'Is quiet, and an end of long distress.
Leap down ! leap in ! One anguish more or less

In this tense tangle of tormented souls
God keeps no strict account of. The stream rolls
Forever and forever. Death is swift,
And easy.'

Then soft shadows seem'd to lift
Long arms out of the streaming dark below,
Wooingly waving to her.

But ah no,
Ah no! She is still afraid of them to-night,
Those plausible familiars! Die? What right
Is hers to die?—a mother, and a wife,
Whose love hath given hostages to life!

The voices of the shadows make reply

'Woman, no right to live is right to die.
What right to live,—which means, what right to eat
(What thou hast ceased to earn) the bread and meat
That's not enough for all,—what unearn'd right
Hast thou to say "*I choose to live?*"'

With might
The mocking shadows mounted, as they spoke,
Nearer, and clearer; and their voices broke
Into a groan that mingled with the roar
Of London, growing louder evermore
With multitudes of moanings from below,
Mysterious, wrathful, miserable.

'Ah no,

'Ah no! For Willie waits for me at home,
And will not sleep all night till I am come.
'Tis late . . . but there were hopes of work to do
I waited . . . tho' in vain. Ah, if he knew!
And how to meet to-morrow?' . . .
A drunken man
Stumbled against her, stared, and then began
To troll a tavern stave, with husky voice,
(The subject coarse, the language strong, not choice)
And humming reel'd away.
Up stream'd again
The voices of the shadows, in disdain:

'A mother? and a wife? Ill-gotten names,
Filch'd from earth's blisses, to increase its shames!
What right have breadless mothers to give birth
To breadless babies? Children, meant for mirth,
And motherhood for rapture, and the bliss
Of wifehood crowning womanhood, the kiss
Of lips, whose kissing melts two lives in one:—
What right was thine, forsooth, because the sun
Is sweet in June, and blood beats high in youth,
To claim those blessings? Claim'd, what right, forsooth,
To change them into curses: craving love,
Who lackest bread? There is no room above
Earth's breast for amorous paupers. Creep below,
And hide thyself from failure!'
'Is it so?'

She murmur'd, 'even so! and yet . . . dear heart,
'I meant to comfort thee!' Then, with a start,
'And he is sick, poor man! No work to-day . . .
No work to-morrow . . . And the rent to pay . . .
And two small mouths to feed!' . . .
Three tiny elves
As plump as Puck, at all things and themselves
Laughing, ran by her in the rain. They were
Chubby, and rosy-cheek'd, with golden hair,
Tossing behind: two girls, a boy: they held
Each other's hands, and so contrived to weld
Their gladnesses in one. No rain, tho' chill,
Could vex their joyous ignorance of ill.
Then, sorrowfully, her thoughts began to stray
Far out of London, many a mile away
Among the meadows:
In green Hertfordshire
When lanes are white with May, the breathing briar
Wafts sweet thoughts to our spirits, if we pass
Between the hedges, and the happy grass,
Beneath, is sprinkled with the o'erblown leaves
Of wild white roses. In the long long eves
The cuckoo calls from every glimmering bower
And lone dim-lighted glade. The small church tower
Smiles kindly at the village underneath.
Ah God! once more to smell the rose's breath
Among those cottage gardens! There's a field
Past the hill-farm, hard by the little weald,

Was first to fill with cowslips every year;
The children used to play there. Could one hear
Once more that merry brook that leaves the leas
Quiet at eve, but thro' the low birch trees
Is ever noisy! Then, at nutting time
The woods are gayer than even in their prime,
And afterwards, there's something, hard to tell,
Full of home-feelings in the healthy smell
Wide over all the red plough'd uplands spread
From burning weeds, what time the woods are dead.

'We were so young! we loved each other so!
Ah yet, . . . if one could live the winter thro'!
And winter's worst is o'er in March . . . who knows?
The times might mend.'
Then thro' her thoughts uprose
The menacing image of the imminent need,
Of this bleak night.
'Two little mouths to feed!
'No work! . . . and Willie sick! . . . and how to pay
To-morrow's rent?' . . .
She pluck'd herself away
From the bewildering river; and again
Stray'd onwards, onwards, thro' the endless rain
Among the endless streets, with weary gait,
And dreary heart, trailing disconsolate
A draggled skirt with feeble feet slip-shod.'
The sky seem'd one vast blackness without God,

Or, if a god, a god like some that here
Be gods of earth, who, missing love, choose fear
For henchman, and so rule a multitude
They have subdued, but never understood.
The roaring of the wheels began anew.
And London down its dismal vortex drew
This wandering minim of the misery
Of millions.

III.

Grey and grisly 'neath this sky
Of bitter darkness, gleam'd the long blind wall
Of that grim institute, we English call
The Poor-House.
We build houses for our poor,
Pay poor-rates,—do our best, indeed, to cure
Their general sickness by all special ways,
If not successful, still deserving praise,
Because implying (which, for my part, I
Applaud intensely) that society
Is answerable, as a whole, to man,
—Ay, and to Christ, since self-styled Christian!
For how the poor, it brings to birth, may fare;
Tho' some French folks count this in chief the' affair
Of Government, which pays for its mistakes
To Revolution, when grim Hunger breaks
His social fetter sometimes. Still, remains
This fact, a sad one:—'spite of all our pains,

The poor increase among us faster still
Than means to feed them, tho' we tax the till
To cram the alms-box. Which is passing strange,
Seeing that this England in the world's wide range
Ranks wealthiest of the nations of the earth.
But thereby hangs a riddle which is worth
The solving some day, if we can. That's all.

This woman, passing by that Poor-House wall,
Shudder'd, and thought . . . no matter! 'twas *a thought*
Only that made her shudder,—till she caught
Her foot against a heap of something strange,
And wet, and soft; which made that shudder change
To one of physical terror.
'Twas as tho'
The multitudinous mud, to scare her so,
Had heap'd itself into a hideous heap,
Not human sure, but living. With a creep
The thing, whate'er it was, her chance foot spurn'd,
Began to move; like humid earth upturn'd
By a snouted mole, disturb'd; or else,—suppose
A swarm of feeding flies, when cluster'd close
About a lump of carrion, or a hive
Of brown-back'd bees. It seem'd to be alive
After this fashion. A collective mass
Of movement, making from the life it has,
Or seems to have, in common, tho' so small,
A sort of monstrous individual.

For, from the inward to the outward moved,
The hideous lump heaved slowly; slowly shoved
Layer after layer of soak'd and rotting rags
On each side, down it, to the sloppy flags
Beneath its headless bulk; thus making space
For the upthrusting of the creature's face,
Or creature's self, whate'er that might have been.
Whence, suddenly emerging,—to be seen,
One must imagine, rather than to see,
Since it look'd nowhere, neither seem'd to be
Surprised, or even conscious,—there was thrust
(As tho' it came up thus because it must,
And not because it would) a human head,
With sexless countenance, that neither said
To man, nor woman . . . 'I belong to you,'
But seem'd a fearful mixture of the two
United in a failure horrible
Of features, meant for human you might tell
By just so much as their lean wolfishness
Contrived more intense meaning to express
Than hunger-heated eye or snarling jaw
Of any real wolf.

Stricken with awe,
The woman, only very poor indeed,
Recoil'd before that creature past all need,
And past all help, too, being past all hope.
For, stern and stark, against the stolid cope
Of the sad, rainy, and enormous night,

That sexless face had fix'd itself upright
At once, and, as it were, mechanically,
With no surprise ; as much as to imply
That it had done with this world everywhere,
And henceforth look'd to Heaven ; yet look'd not there
With any sort of hope, or thankfulness
For things expected, but in grim distress,
From the mere wont of gazing constantly
On darkness.
London's Life went roaring by,
And took no notice of this thing at all.
It seem'd a heap of mud against the wall.
And if it were a vagrant . . . well ? why, there
The Poor-House stands. The thing is *its* affair,
Not yours, nor mine ; who pay the rates when due,
And trust in God, as all good Christians do.
And yet,—if you or I had pass'd that way,
And noticed (which we did not do, I say.
Not ours the fault !) the creature crouching there,
I swear to you, O Brother, and declare
For my part, on my conscience, that, altho'
I never yet was so opprest, I know,
By instant awe of any king or queen,
Prelate, or prince, whate'er the chance hath been,
As to have felt my heart's calm beating stopp'd,
Or my knees faulter, yet I must have dropp'd
(Ay, and you too, friend whom my heart knows well !)
In presence of that unapproachable

Appalling Majesty of Misery;
Lifting its pale-faced protest to the sky
Silently against you, and me, no doubt,
And all the others of this social rout
That calls itself fine names in modern books.

IV.

The woman, stone-cold 'neath the stony looks
Of this rag-robed Medusa, shrank away
Abasht; not daring, at the first, to say
Such words as, meant for comfort, might have been
Too much like insult to that grim-faced Queen,
Or King, whiche'er it was, of Wretchedness.
Her own much misery seem'd so much less
Than this, flung down before her,—by God sent,
It may have been, for her admonishment.
But, at the last, she timidly drew near
And whisper'd faintly in the creature's ear
'Have you no home?'
No look even made reply,
Much less a word. But on the stolid sky
The stolid face stared ever.
'Are you cold?'
A sort of inward creepy movement roll'd
The rustled rags. And still the stolid face
Perused the stolid sky. Perhaps the case
Supposed was too self-evident to claim
More confirmation than what creeping came

To crumble those chill rags ; subsiding soon,
As tho' to be unnoticed were a boon,
All kinds of notice having proved unkind.
Such creatures as men hunt are loth to find
The hole discovered where they hide ; and, when
By chance you stir them out of it, they then
Make haste to feign to be already dead,
Hoping escape that way.
The woman said
More faintly 'Are you hungry ?'
There, at once
Finding intensest utterance for the nonce,
With such a howl 'twould chill your blood to hear
The wolf-jaws wail'd out 'Hungry ? ha, look here !'
And, therewith, fingers of a skeleton claw
Tearing asunder those foul rags, you saw
. . . . Was it a woman's breast ? It might be so.
It look'd like nothing human that I know.
She, whose faint question such shrill response woke,
Stood stupified, stunn'd, sick.

v.

Just then there broke
Down the dim street (and any sound just then,
Shaped from the natural utterance of men,
To still that echoed howl, had brought relief
To her sick senses) a loud shout . . . 'Stop thief !
Stop thief !'

A man rush'd by those women,—rush'd
So vehemently by them, that he brush'd
Their raggedness together,—as he pass'd,
Dropp'd something on the pavement,—and was fast
Wrapp'd in the rainy vapours of the night,
That, in a moment, smear'd him out of sight,
And, in a moment after, let emerge
The trampling crowd; which, all in haste to urge
Its honest chase, swept o'er those women twain,
Regardless, and rush'd on into the rain,
Leaving them both, upon the slippery flags,
Bruised, trampled,—rags in colloquy with rags,
And so,—alone.

VI.

Meanwhile the wolfish face,
Resettled to its customary place,
Was staring as before, into the sky,
Stolid. The other woman heavily
Gather'd herself together, bruised, in pain,
Half rose up, slipp'd on something, and again
Sank feebly back upon her hand.
But now
What new emotion shakes her? Doth she know
What this is, that her fingers on the stone
Have felt, and, feeling, close so fiercely on?
This pocketbook? with gold enough within
To feed .... Alas! and must it be a sin

To keep it? Were it possible to pay
With what its very robber flings away
For bread... bread!... bread!... and still not starve, yet still
Be honest!
'Were one doing very ill
If... One should pray... if one *could* pray, that's sure,
The strength would come at last. We are so poor!
So poor... 'tis terrible! To understand
Such things, one should be learn'd, and have at hand
Ever so many good religious books,
And texts, and things. And then one starves. It looks
So like a godsend. What does the Book say
About "the lions, roaring, seek their prey"?
And the young ravens? "Ye are more than these."
Ah, but one starves, tho'!'
Crouch'd upon her knees
She dragg'd herself up close against the wall,
And counted the gold pieces.
'Food for all?
'Us four? And *that* makes five. The rent to pay
To-morrow? Father, give me strength, to pray
Thy will be done!... What, if it *were* His will
That one should keep it,... since one finds it? Still
Have bread to eat?... till one can work, of course.
Why else should God have sent it? Which is worse
To starve, or... 'Tis as long as it is broad.

And then, consider this, I pray, dear God!
Two little mouths already, and no bread.
And my poor man this three days sick in bed.
And no more needlework, it seems, for me
Till times turn round. Who knows when that will be?
Ah, . . . and consider yet again. That's four
To feed already. Then a *fifth?* One more!
However can we eke it out? Ah me,
God's creatures to be left like this! Just see
How thin she is!'

Her hands about the thing
They clutch'd began to twitch. Still fingering
The gold convulsively, again she thought,
Or tried to think, of lessons early taught,
Easy to learn once, in the village school,
When to be honest seem'd the simple rule
For being happy; and of many a text
That task'd old Sundays; growing more perplext,
As, more and more, her giddy memory made
Haphazard catches at the words.

'Who said
"Therefore I say unto you" (ah! 'twere sweet)
"Have no thought for your lives, what ye shall eat"
(If that were possible!)—"nor what to wear"?
Have no thought? that should mean, then, have no care!
"Your Father knoweth of what things ye need
Before ye ask" . . . "The morrow shall take heed
For its own things" . . . ? And still, 'tis sure He bade

The people pray "Give us our daily bread."
And elsewhere ... "Ask, and ye shall have" ...
'And yet
One starves, I say.
'Ay! They that have shall get.
That's somewhere, too, and nearer fact, no doubt.
If the rich knew what the poor go without
Sometimes! They do their best for us, that's sure.
But still, the poor ... they are so very poor!
"Whoever giveth to the least of these
Giveth to Me" ...? Why one can give with ease
What is one's own ... when *anything's* one's own!
Ha! whose is this? There is no owner known.
God sent it here. Whose is it *now*?'
She stopp'd,
And trembled. And the tempting treasure dropp'd
From her faint hand.
She snatch'd it up again,
And cried 'Mine! mine! be it the Devil's gain
Or God's good gift! Sure, what folks must, folks may
And folks must live.'
She gazed out every way
Along the gloomy street. In desert land
To tempted saints mankind was more at hand
Than now it seem'd to this poor spirit pent
In populous city.

VII.

Hurriedly, she bent
Above her grim companion, in whose ear
She mutter'd, hoarse and quick... 'Make haste! see here.
'There's bread enough for all of us. Get up!
Quick! quick! and come away. To-night we'll sup,
To-morrow we'll not starve... another day,
Another... and then, let come what come may!
Off! off!'
No answer.
To the stolid sky
The stolid face was turn'd immovably.
The sky was dark: the face was dark. The face
And sky were silent both: you could not trace
The faintest gleam of light in the dark look
Of either.
Vehemently the woman shook
That miserable mass of rags. It let
Itself be shaken: did not strive to get
Up, or away: said nought. A worried rat
So lets itself be shaken by a cat
Or mastiff, when the vermin's back, 'tis clear,
Is snapp'd, and there's no more to feel, or fear.
'O haste!'
No answer.
'It is late... late! come!'
No answer.

Those lean jaws were lock'd and dumb.
Then o'er the *living* woman's face there spread
Death's hue reflected.
'Late!... too late!' she said.
'O Heaven, to die *thus!*'
With a broken wail
She turn'd, and fled fast, fast.
Fled whither?

VIII.

Pale
Thro' the thick vagueness of the vaporous night,
From the dark alley, with a clouded light
Two rheumy, melancholy lampions flare.
They are the eyes of the Police.
In there,
Down the dark archway, thro' the greasy door,
Passionately pushing past the three or four
Complacent constables that cluster'd round
A costermonger, in the gutter found
Incapably, but combatively, drunk,
The woman hurried. Thro' the doorway slunk
A peaky pinch'd-up child with frighten'd face,
Important witness in some murder case
About to come before the magistrate
To-morrow. At a dingy table sat
The slim Inspector, spectacled, severe,
Rapidly writing.

In a sort of fear
Of seeing it again, she shut her eyes
And flung it down there. With sedate surprise
The man look'd up.

'Because I do not know
The owner, sir' . . . she said. 'A while ago
I found it. And there's money in it . . . much,
Oh, so much money, sir!'
A hungry touch
Of the defeated Tempter made her wince
To see him count it. Such a short while since
She, too, had done the same.

'Your name? address?'
She gave them. Easy, from the last to guess
Their wretchedness who dwelt in such a place!
The shrewd and practised eye perused her face
Contented, not surprised; for they that see
Crime oftenest, oftenest, too, see honesty
Where most of us would seldom look for it,
Or find it with surprise . . . in rags, to wit.

'Honest and poor. Deserves a large reward.
No doubt there'll be one.'

'Ah, the times are hard,
So hard, God help us all! and, sir, indeed

We are so poor. Two little mouths to feed.
If one could only get some work to do!'

'Ah . . . married? out of work? and children? two?
Mem. Let the owner know, if found. Good night.'

But still she stood there. He had turn'd to write.
She stood, and eyed him with a dreary eye,
And did not move. He look'd up presently.
'Not gone, yet? eh? what more?'

'And, sir' ... she said,
'There's by the Work-House wall a woman...dead.
There was no room within, sir, I suppose.
There are so many of them. Heaven knows
'Tis hard for such as we to understand
How such things happen in a Christian land.'

Her face twitch'd, and her cough grew fierce again,
As she pass'd out into the night and rain.

MELANCHOLIA.

AFTER ALBERT DÜRER.

I.

Not in lone wastes, nor by the desert sea,
But aye in sound of ceaseless human moan,
By populous shores where wealthy cities be,
The deep-eyed Melancholy dwells alone:
Her elbow large is based on her broad knee;
An iron-claspèd volume hath she thrown
Athwart her hollow ample lap; but she
Doth neither read, nor even look, therein;
Whose eyes with innermost intensity
Burn outward; her shut hand props her upslanted chin.

II.

Her vesture vast, of watchet hue, the mould
Of her strong limbs from lap to foot doth heap
In many a massive fall, and rigid fold;
And all unmov'd the mighty hem doth sleep
Flat on the chilly floor. Her hair down roll'd,

With unregarded curl, doth thinly creep
O'er her stoop'd shoulder. Heavy from the hold
Of her firm girdle hang full many keys:
For she to Power is porteress, and doth keep
The lock'd and guarded gates of mightiest monarchies.

III.

Crownèd she is with the first-budded leaves
Of Spring, that putteth forth delightful things;
But her knit brow beneath her garland grieves:
Folded about her back with eagle wings
Half spread for flight; but her strong body cleaves
Unto the toilful earth. The wealth of kings
Is at her feet, but of her eye receives
No notice: it is hers: she heeds it not.
Her labour lieth around her; measurings,
Plans, shapes, globe, solid, plank, adze, plane, and melting-pot.

IV.

Her foot is on the hammer and the saw:
Her hand is on the compass; and she waits.
Who knoweth what mighty circle she will draw?
What calculation vast she meditates?
A lean wolf-hound, hard-by, with doubled paw,
Snores on the flint; her creature tired, that sates,
(Stretching at her firm foot his shaggy jaw)
In slumber deep, deep animal weariness.

But never his great Spirit-Queen abates
Her intellectual watch, and strenuous sleeplessness.

V.

Because this Melancholy is, indeed,
The mightiest maker underneath the sun.
Yet never shall be satisfied the need
Of her deep heart, nor her long tasks be done.
Sorrow and strength are hers: and she doth feed
With infinite labour infinite longing. None
That know her ever shall from toil be freed.
Rest is not hers to give: but in her hand
Dominion hangs, and sorrows, that have won
Great battles, harness'd wait upon her stern command.

VI.

And some, beholding her with woeful eyes,
Have said, "This is Our Lady of Desire
That, feeding earth, doth hunger for the skies,
Full-fatal is her kiss, and fraught with fire.
Know her not." Others, "Nay, but she is wise,
Strong, patient, and of toil doth never tire.
Sad is she, certes; but her inmost sighs
Are the strong souls of deeds. She is her own
Employer, and doth nothing serve for hire.
Therefore this Melancholy is most worthy to be known."

VII.

Above, a hollow bell doth hang i' the beam ;
Therefrom a rope. O'er one of her large wings
Upon the shadowy wall a sullen scheme
Is faintly traced of careful numberings.
Near which, above the other wing, doth gleam
A livid hourglass that, unmark'd down flings
His measured sands in small monotonous stream.
Death creeps, and peeps into her deep Endeavour ;
Time, mocking, saith "Thou makest glorious things
For my unmaking." She, not answering, museth ever.

VIII.

And on an old millstone that leans hard by
The head of the unmindful Melancholy,
With little wings, the Cherub Infancy
Sits conning her great lesson, meek and lowly;
Across whose small upgather'd knees doth lie
An open tablet that is cover'd wholly
With his first lore. There hangeth from on high
A brazen balance. Slowly stealeth down
The night wherein can no man work, and slowly
The seas and skies grow dark about the distant town.

IX.

There, heavily, across the troubled night
A warning comet trails her hideous hair,
And underneath, the wroth sea waves are white.

The city soundeth, girt with dreadful glare.
The cataract cloud spouts storm. With faintest light,
Athwart the seething dark suspended fair,
A wan moon-rainbow wavers on the height.
A thing of darkness and of shapelessness
Half-bat, half-serpent, flitteth outward, there;
Much like the sadness struggling under stress
Of a strong purpose vex'd, not baffled, by despair.

X.

This is a mystery. And methinks 'twere worth
Much thought to know what things it would express.
Dürer, the drawer of dread things, drew forth
The image of it, and the marvellousness,
Out of the angry labour of the North,
Whose child he was: to be (if I can guess
Aright) man's protest against death, and dust,
Sad time, sick sloth, and wretched-heartedness,
And shame, and miserable self-mistrust,
And wicked fears that do full oft men's souls distress.

LAST WORDS

OF A SENSITIVE SECOND-RATE POET.

WILL, are you sitting and watching there yet? And I know, by a certain skill
That grows out of utter wakefulness, the night must be far spent, Will:
For, lying awake so many a night, I have learn'd at last to catch
From the crowing cock, and the clanging clock, and the sound of the beating watch,
A misty sense of the measureless march of Time, as he passes here,
Leaving my life behind him; and I know that the dawn is near.
But you have been watching three nights, Will, and you look'd so wan to-night,
I thought, as I saw you sitting there, in the sad monotonous light

Of the moody night-lamp near you, that I could not choose
but close
My lids as fast, and lie as still, as tho' I lay in a doze:
For, I thought, "He will deem I am dreaming, and then he
may steal away,
And sleep a little: and this will be well." And truly, I
dream'd, as I lay
Wide awake, but all as quiet, as tho', the last office done,
They had streak'd me out for the grave, Will, to which they
will bear me anon.
Dream'd; for old things and places came dancing about my
brain,
Like ghosts that dance in an empty house: and my thoughts
went slipping again
By green back-ways forgotten to a stiller circle of time,
Where violets, faded for ever, seem'd blowing as once in their
prime:
And I fancied that you and I, Will, were boys again as
of old,
At dawn on the hill-top together, at eve in the field by the fold;
Till the thought of this was growing too wildly sweet to be
borne,
And I oped mine eyes, and turn'd me round, and there, in
the light forlorn,
I find you sitting beside me. But the dawn is at hand, I
know.
Sleep a little. I shall not die to-night. You may leave me.
Go.

Eh! is it time for the drink? must you mix it? it does me no good.

But thanks, old friend, true friend! I would live for your sake, if I could.

Ay, there are some good things in life, that fall not away with the rest.

And, of all best things upon earth, I hold that a faithful friend is the best.

For woman, Will, is a thorny flower: it breaks, and we bleed and smart:

The blossom falls at the fairest, and the thorn runs into the heart.

And woman's love is a bitter fruit; and, however he bite it, or sip,

There's many a man has lived to curse the taste of that fruit on his lip.

But never was any man yet, as I ween, be he whosoever he may,

That has known what a true friend is, Will, and wish'd that knowledge away.

You were proud of my promise, faithful despite of my fall,

Sad when the world seem'd over-sweet, sweet when the world turn'd gall:

When I cloak'd myself in the pride of praise from what God grieved to see,

You saw thro' the glittering lie of it all, and silently mourn'd for me:

When the world took back what the world had given, and scorn with praise chang'd place,
I, from my sackcloth and ashes, look'd up, and saw hope glow on your face:
Therefore, fair weather be yours, Will, whether it shines or pours,
And, if I can slip from out of my grave, my spirit will visit yours.

O woman-eyes that have smiled and smiled, O woman-lips that have kist
The life-blood out of my heart, why thus for ever do you persist,
Pressing out of the dark all round, to bewilder my dying hours
With your ghostly sorceries brew'd from the breath of your poison-flowers?
Still, tho' the idol be broken, I see at their ancient revels,
The riven altar around, come dancing the selfsame devils.
Lente currite, lente currite, noctis equi!
Linger a little, O Time, and let me be saved ere I die!
How many a night 'neath her window have I walk'd in the wind and rain,
Only to look at her shadow fleet over the lighted pane!
Alas! 'twas the shadow that rested, 'twas herself that fleeted, you see,
And now I am dying, I know it:—dying, and where is she?

Dancing divinely, perchance, or, over her soft harp strings,
Using the past to give pathos to the little new song that she sings.
Bitter? I dare not be bitter in the few last hours left to live.
Needing so much forgiveness, God grant me at least to forgive.
There can be no space for the ghost of her face down in the narrow room,
And the mole is blind, and the worm is mute, and there must be rest in the tomb.
And just one failure more or less to a life that seems to be
(Whilst I lie looking upon it, as a bird on the broken tree
She hovers about, ere making wing for a land of lovelier growth,
Brighter blossom, and purer air, somewhere far off in the south,)
Failure, crowning failure, failure from end to end,
Just one more or less, what matter, to the many no grief can mend?
Not to know vice is virtue, not fate, however men rave:
And, next to this I hold that man to be but a coward and slave
Who bears the plague-spot about him, and, knowing it, shrinks or fears
To brand it out, tho' the burning knife should hiss in his heart's hot tears.

But I have caught the contagion of a world that I never loved,
Pleased myself with approval of those that I never approved,
Palter'd with pleasures that pleased not, and fame where no fame could be,
And how shall I look, do you think, Will, when the angels are looking on me?
Yet oh! the confident spirit once mine, to dare and to do!
Take the world into my hand, and shape it, and make it anew:
Gather all men in my purpose, men in their darkness and dearth,
Men in their meanness and misery, made of the dust of the earth,
Mould them afresh, and make out of them Man, with his spirit sublime,
Man, the great heir of Eternity, dragging the conquests of Time!
Therefore I mingled among them, deeming the poet should hold
All natures saved in his own, as the world in the ark was of old;
All natures saved in his own to be types of a nobler race,
When the old world passeth away, and the new world taketh his place.
Triple fool in my folly! purblind and impotent worm,
Thinking to move the world, who could not myself stand firm!

Cheat of a worn-out trick, as one that on shipboard roves
Wherever the wind may blow, still deeming the continent moves,
Blowing the frothy bubble of life's brittle purpose away;
Child, ever chasing the morrow, who now cannot ransom a day:
Still I call'd Fame to lead onward, forgetting she follows behind
Those who know whither they walk thro' the praise or dispraise of mankind.
Friend, lay your hand in my own, and swear to me, when you have seen
My body borne out from the door, ere the grass on my grave shall be green,
You will burn every book I have written. And so perish, one and all,
Each trace of the struggle that fail'd with the life that I cannot recall.
Dust and ashes, earth's dross, which the mattock may give to the mole!
Something, secure of achievement survives, as I trust, with the soul.

Something? . . . Ay, something comes back to me . . . Think! that I might have been . . . what?
Almost, I fancy at times, what I meant to have been, and am not.

Where was the fault? Was it strength fell short-! And yet
(I can speak of it now)
How my spirit sung like the resonant nerve of a warrior's
battle bow
When the shaft has leapt from the string, what time, her
first bright banner unfurl'd,
Song aim'd her arrowy purpose in me sharp at the heart of
the world!
Was it the hand that falter'd, unskill'd? or was it the eye
that deceived?
However I reason it out, there remains a failure time has not
retrieved.
I said I would live in all lives that beat, and love in all loves
that be:
I would crown me lord of all passions (and the passions were
lord of me!)
I would compass every circle, I would enter at every
door,
In the starry spiral of science, and the labyrinth of
lore.
Arrogant error! whereby I starved like the fool in the fable
of old,
Whom the gods destroyed by the gift he craved, turning all
things to gold.
A little knowledge will turn youth grey. And I stood, chill
in the sun,
Naming you each of the roses; blest by the beauty of
none.

My song had an after-savour of the salt of many tears,
Or it burn'd with a bitter foretaste of the end as it now appears.
And the world, that had paused to listen awhile, because the first notes were gay,
Pass'd on its way with a sneer in a smile: "Has he nothing fresher to say?
This poet's mind was a weedy flower that presently comes to nought!"
For the world was not so sad but what my song was sadder, it thought.
Comfort me not. For if aught be worse than failure from over-stress
Of a life's prime purpose, it is to sit down content with a little success.
Talk not of genius baffled. Genius is master of man.
Genius does what it must, and Talent does what it can.
Blot out my name, that the spirits of Shakspeare and Milton and Burns
Look not down on the praises of fools with a pity my soul yet spurns.
And yet, had I only the trick of an aptitude shrewd of its kind,
I should have lived longer, I think, more merry of heart and of mind.
Surely I knew (who better?) the innermost secret of each
Bird, and beast, and flower. Failed I to give to them speech?

All the pale spirits of storm, that sail down streams of the wind,
Thro' the cloven thunder-cloud, with wild hair blowing behind;
All the soft seraphs that float in the light of the crimson eve,
When Hesper begins to glitter, and the heavy woodland to heave:
All the white nymphs of the water that dwell and die, the lilies alone:
And the buskin'd maids for the love of whom the hoary oak-trees groan;
They came to my call in the forest; they crept to my feet from the river:
They softly look'd out of the sky when I sung, and their wings beat with breathless endeavour
The blocks of the broken thunder piling their stormy lattices,
Over the moaning mountain walls, and over the sobbing seas.
So many more reproachful faces around my bed!
Voices moaning about me: "Ah! couldst thou not heed what we said?"
Peace to the past! it skills not now: these thoughts that vex it in vain
Are but the dust of a broken purpose blowing about the brain
Which presently will be tenantless, when the wanton worms carouse,
And the mole builds over my bones his little windowless house.

It is growing darker and stranger, Will, and colder—dark and cold,
Dark and cold! Is the lamp gone out? Give me thy hand to hold.
No: 'tis life's brief candle burning down. Tears? tears, Will! Why,
This which we call dying is only ceasing to die.
The hard thing was to live, Will. With flowers and music, life,
Like a pagan sacrifice, leads us along to this dark High Priest with the knife.
I have been too peevish at mere mischance. For whether we build it, friend,
Of brick or jasper, life's large base dwindles into this point at the end,
A kind of nothing! Who knows whether 'tis fittest to weep or laugh
At those thin curtains the spider spins o'er each dusty epitaph?

Wherefore, if man be immortal (which faith in the days that are done
I have ever upheld 'neath the weight of that Present, which now is this Gone)
Should he fear lest his feeble unfolding from this cramp and chrysalis world
Of forces sheathed in himself, by the strongest not wholly unfurl'd,

This first of man's efforts at growth, howsoever it fail or
succeed,
Be the last of his dealings with time, and the spirit stop short
with the deed?
Do you know, I have often thought, Will, that, we feverish
spirits are, here
In life, shut down, like wingèd moths enclosed in a crystal
sphere,
Thro' whose thin glassy element we can see upon all sides
round
The starry spaces, the heavens, the heights, the depths, the
immense, the profound;
Which seen, the soul no sooner soars to attain what her
passion perceives,
Than bruised by her limits, with frustrate wing, she falls to
the earth. Death cleaves
With a kindly touch, as he passes by, this globe, this brittle
thing
That clips us round, and at last we are free. But ah woe, if
the wounded wing
Of the broken spirit can bear no more the beating heart
above!
For me there will soon be scope to soar: but this sorrowful
weight of love
I shall hardly uplift from the earthy bed to which it is
sinking me.
Pray for my soul, in her trial, at hand, of the wonderful world
to be!

Pray for my soul, that she may find and fashion some fairer way
From the manifold modes of expression as yet unfound, unattempted, to say
The word within, which that handful of earth the hard sexton will shovel anon
On the lips of a buried man can surely not check, when its meaning is gone
To work on the world that death opens. I wait. There are ages in store.
But the love . . . ah, the love, Will? the fair human face that I follow'd of yore,
It eludes me at last, and for ever! for ever I lose it! the most
I can gain from the grave, is—not this, but the knowledge of why it was lost.

A BEATEN ARMY.

1.

We have struck our last blow, we have spent our last shot now,
And we pour here in protest the last drops of life.
All—save man's honest right—we have lost, they have got now,
And theirs is the triumph where ours was the strife.

2.

Ours, the blood on the bastion: our foeman's, the flag there:
His, the soil of our birth: ours, the graves he insults:
And our brave dead are dumb while their murderers brag there
Of crimes praised on earth for successful results.

3.

Be it so! tho' Right Trampled be counted for Wrong,
And that pass for Right which is Evil Victorious,
Here, where Virtue is feeble, and Villany strong,
'Tis a Cause, not the *fate* of a Cause, that is glorious.

4.

Here, where heroes are vanquisht, where robbers are victors,
Where the Wronger the Judge is,—from Cæsar to God
Scorn'd Justice, preceded no more by her lictors,
Appeals for escape from the axe and the rod.

5.

Be it so! We are saved thus from man's obligations,
For man's mere success, to the means which deduct
From pure Truth just so much as is owed to relations
With Chance, for what Chance gives—this world's usufruct.

6.

Earth's Success, at the purest, with stain of the earthy
Leaves the white worth of Truth, where it touches it, less:
But what worth has Success in the cause that's unworthy?
We have fail'd? Be it so! We are pure of Success.

7.

And so man puts upon us no claim, to diminish
Our claim upon God—which is perfected thus:
Here our least gain begins where their greatest must finish:
They—the debtors to Earth for what Heaven owes to us!

8.

Graves are better than crowns thus. Oh, ever and ever
This bartering Eternity's birthright to Time!
God, we give Thee, unblemisht, our frustrate endeavour:
Earth, we leave thee, unchallenged, thy share in man's crime!

A POOR MAN

OR THE MATCHMAKER AND THE BIRD.

(BEING AN ALLEGORY.)

I KNEW a man, the world call'd poor
Because he barely paid the price
Of leave to live. I pass'd his door,
I think, once daily, twice or thrice.
A little door in the long street,
Left open to let in the sun
Which, warmly its old friend to greet,
Into the house did laughing run.
For there was that in this man's face
Which made you feel the sun was bound
To come and shine on any place
Where such a face was to be found.
He barely earn'd the bread of life
By making little wooden matches:
He shaped them neatly with a knife
And tied them up in tiny batches:

The labour of his life was this.
Perhaps, if I could feel quite sure
Mine were as innocent as his,
I should not mourn to be as poor.
Because, whene'er I chanced to meet
That man's face, I perceived it smiled
A smile as innocent, and sweet,
And simple, as a little child,
Smiling at all things. I suppose
His soul was in its infancy,
Life's smiling-time, which most men lose
By living. Else, I wonder why
I felt so sure he smiled thus too,
When neither I, nor any one,
Was there to see him. Think! how few
There are, that smile when quite alone!
And from a cage upon the wall
A bird sang to him all day long,
So sweet and merry a madrigal
That all who, passing, heard that song
Felt younger, therefore better; just
As tho' the times were back again,
Which man's growth buries in the dust
It drops from its own branches, when
We yet could hear, from the blue sky,
In accents clearly understood,
Our Father saying to us 'Try,
My children, to be glad and good.'

So I felt : so felt all that heard :
  Till, pleased, the neighbours each began
To pray 'God bless the singing bird,
  'That sings to bless the working man!'
For in the work of the man's hand,
  As in song of the bird's heart,
There was, we all could understand,
  A unison. Each seem'd a part
O' the other : and, still, both, as 't were,
  Of something higher,—since both praised it.
The joy of labour, not the care :
  'The Poetry of Life,' some phrased it.
The world (whatever that word means,
  That means so little, or so much,
According as our humour leans)
  Holds rich, or poor, whom good things, such
As fetch the world's good price, belong
  Or lack to. What's the value which
God sets on Labour and on Song?
  This poor man had them. Was he rich?
The old watchmaker (still his shop
  Stands yonder, where the town buys watches)
Used daily, passing here, to stop
  And greet my poor friend of the matches.
And, day by day, that rich man offer'd
  To buy this poor man's bird away.
Ten gulden . . . twelve . . . fifteen . . . he proffer'd :
  And still the poor man answer'd Nay.

Ten gulden? twelve? fifteen? a fortune
Undream'd of by a man so poor!
And still that rich man, to importune
This poor man, daily seeks his door:
And, day by day, the silver pieces
Before the poor man's eyes are spread
And, day by day, the sum increases:
And still the poor man shakes his head.
I watch'd this bargain, day by day.
We poets, in dark corners peeping
'For subjects', as you people say,
Have cat's eyes that when closed, and sleeping
As you might think, are most awake.
I, with this friendly fellow-creature,
Had bargains of my own to make;
My business being with Human Nature;
Whose ins and outs if we would turn to,
We men of verse must not be nice.
And I would have you people learn, too,
For what *we* learn we pay the price.
All these things happen'd, you may know,
In old Vienna, famed ('tis said there)
As now it is, in years ago,
For wooden matches which are made there.
Next time he came, the mechanician
Here, in his crafty hand, did bring
(The wary, wicked, old magician!)
An instrument, a marvellous thing!

And, quoth the wealthy man of watches
'Good morrow, friend! and, good friend, pray
How many dozen wooden matches
Do you suppose you make a-day?'
'Some twenty dozen. Sometimes more,
It may be.' 'Twenty dozen, say you?
And, good friend, for each dozen score
How much may your employers pay you?'
'For every dozen kreutzers five.'
'The paltry fellows! Only that?
A beggarman, as I'm alive,
Gets more by holding out his hat.'
Therewith, triumphant, up he takes
A block of wood that's lying by,
Sets to it his instrument, and makes
Some twenty hundred matches fly
All neatly shaved across the table.
'Magic! why here, in half a second,
Are matches more than I am able
To make in twenty days well reckon'd,'
The poor man shouts in wonderment.
'Just so, friend. Here your fortune see.
Keep you the cunning instrument,
And give the singing bird to me.'
Amazed, subdued, bewilder'd, lost,
The poor man render'd up the song,
The labour, of his life. Almost
I hoped that rich man, for the wrong

He did this poor man, might be stricken
In time by some avenging twinge;
And something in me seem'd to sicken,
As when a sudden sallow tinge,
For all the flaring of the sun,
Shows the first sign of sure decay
In Summer's glorious green begun.
For when I heard my poor friend say
''Tis magic! devilcraft!' I thought
He had good cause for saying this,
And that the Devil might have bought
God's gift away—that smile of his.
But now he flourish'd and grew rich,
Gain'd money, spent it, throve in trade,
Retired, and lived at ease. All which
Was cause for smiling—so folks said.
And yet they say he smiled no more
(And I believe the thing they say)
That smile he used to smile of yore,
When he was poor, and work'd all day.
How should he smile so? when the song,
The labour, of his life were gone?
Said I, just now, that all day long
He used to smile, when quite alone?
Error! Who less alone than he
With work and song, then? It was *now*
The man was *quite* alone, you see.
And now he smiled no more, I know:

Because this difference rests between
Man's work—which Nature cheers meanwhile,
And the mere work of a machine :—
One smiles, the other hath no smile.
So still about my mind will lurk
The question . . . There's some value, sure,
God's Will assigns to Song and Work :
This rich man lack'd them. Was he poor?

A MAN OF SCIENCE

OR THE BOTANIST'S GRAVE.

"Here lie the mortal remains" (I may spare you the limitless list
Of academies, institutes, colleges, orders, whereof he was member)
Of Doctor Theophilus Timothy Bloom, the renown'd botanist,
Deceased (so his gravestone instructs you) the fourteenth day of December,

In the Year of Our Lord, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty-two."
See! the lichens, already revenging themselves on their former tormentor,
Sprawl over his new-cut name, and have hidden it half out of view.
Meanwhile, I that knew the man, mourning my mild-eyed Mentor,

Graced in his dust by this epitaph lean and bald as himself,
Whom I fancy I still see spreading his specimens dry in the sun
He has taken his final farewell of, bequeathing, at least, to my shelf
Full forty folios in print, and a manuscript newly begun

On the carbonaceous compounds found in botanical tissues,—
Cellulose, glucose, lignine, dextrine, inuline, starch,—
A treatise laboriously written, and raising remarkable issues
On all questions of cellular structure, commenced but a year back in March,—

For the honour and glory of Science, as well as my old friend's sake,
I, that knew him, I say, here relate you his life from beginning to end.
—Hark! how the throstle is singing! and yonder bluebells in the brake,
How they nod on the noontide airs! . . . Peace be to the soul of my friend!

Man's life dwindles apace, while the world grows vaster and vaster,
And Nature, pleasing herself, smiles heedless of simple or sage.

Be it known, then, that Doctor Theophilus Timothy Bloom, our master,
Who has left us forlorn of his lights in the sixtieth year of his age,

He, too (who could imagine it?), under that lean leathern hide of his
Once bore about the high-beating and bountiful heart of a boy,
A heart full of wonder and worship! Was passionate, too, in the pride of his
New-born belief in himself as a being capacious for joy.

Bright you may image the eye of him (long since dull as a paste eye),
Bright with a brilliant hope in a July morning sweet,
When the boy's blithe step thro' the college cloister bounded hasty,
And, proud, at the door of the Teacher the passionate boy's heart beat.

"Speak, my Pupil!" "O Master, I burn with a boundless impatience TO KNOW."
"For this must I praise thee, my Pupil. For knowledge is joy to the creature
Created to know the Creator. Yet patience! since knowledge is slow,
Being infinite. *What* wouldst thou know?" And the boy, unabash'd, answer'd, "Nature."

"Nature is vaster than knowledge. What wouldst thou
know *of* her, my son?"
"Not, O Master, the *act*, which I see, but the *thought*,
which I cannot discern:
I stand in the centre, gaze round me, see everywhere action
alone,
And find nowhere the source of the thought found in
action wherever I turn."

Said the Teacher, "In order, my Pupil, to reach to the
source of the thought,
We must follow the act in succession. The thought may
be one, once for all,
All at once; but the action is many and diverse, to unity
brought
In the mind by slow aggregates growing alike from the
great and the small.

"There is but one vast universal dynamic, one mover, one
might,
Variously operant under the various conditions it
finds:
And we call that by turns electricity, friction, caloric, and
light,
Which is none of these things, and yet all of them. Ask
of the waves and the winds,

"Ask of the stars of the firmament, ask of the flowers of the field,
They will answer you all of them, naming it each by a different name.
For the meaning of Nature is neither wholly conceal'd nor reveal'd,
But her mind is seen to be single in her acts that are nowhere the same.

"Each of these acts is a spy and informer upon her: and any
Of the separate sciences, following these, may be follow'd by man:
For the goal of man's mind is one, but the goings of men's minds many,
And each, by his own way going, must get to the goal as he can.

"By the hundred ways that await you are waiting a hundred guides:
Yet you can but walk one way at a time, follow one guide, use
One chart, in despite of the ninety-nine others each comer decides
At the outset to take or renounce, as his choice may predominate. Choose!"

Heavy, then, hearing this, was the heart of the student, whose soul
But a moment before on her wing was uplifting the world's light load,
And, "How can I choose me, O Master, the road, since I see not the goal?
Or how can I choose me the guide, since I see not even the road?"

The Master, smiling, answer'd . . . "Of the works of Nature, those
Wherein her method of working is easiest found of detection,
Are certain living bodies whose life can but feebly oppose
The life-seeking, life-slaying process of scientific dissection:

"These bodies are vegetal bodies: the dealing of Science with these
Is the least of her difficult labours. Begin, then, with Botany . . . Stay!
Open the door before you, and turn to the right, if you please.
You are in the Botanical Class, now. Stay here, friend. I wish you good day."

So sitteth Theophilus perch'd on the brim of the beaker of knowledge,
Poor fly! sipping . . . Nature? no, Botany,—merely one kind of ingredient

Of the complex Elixir he thirsts for :—the blue-eyed hope of the College,
A maiden-minded student, humble of heart and obedient.

But O what a hopeless confusion doth Order at first sight appear!
Unwearied Theophilus, sitting, and conning the grammar of Nature,
Thro' the whole of the humming hot noon with the cuckoo's note cleaving it clear,
Is it knowledge thou seekest? Then patience, and master, meanwhile, nomenclature.

So, like a drunken bee, you behold him, bewilder'd, floundering,
Foot-deep, faint in the pollen; or, now, climbing filaments, high on
The polypetalous whorl; now, wandering round and around a ring
Rotate, campanulate, ventricose, valvate . . . O wheel of Ixion!

Day after day, and still darkness. At length a light breaks on the labour.
For Linnæus, the Lecturer tells us, has classified plants, single-handed.

"Classification of plants?" . . . All hail! bid the pipe and the tabor
Be joyful! the chaos grows cosmic: at length on firm ground we are landed!

No! . . . For this classification, the learnèd Professor continues,
Is utterly wrong; since it separates plants into sexes, like men;
Whereas plants are not plagued, like us humans, in that way, So brace up your sinews,
Push on, and good-by to Linnæus. The light's out. All darkness again.

Not that, just yet, it much matters: no cause, at the least, for dejection.
Here's a new house, where the first thing is simply to stow away lumber;
Make yourself room to look round you; in time, after further reflection,
Doubtless you'll hit on some better arrangement; and, once disencumber

The ground that you stand upon, presently things will drop into their places,
Each his appropriate corner find out, and most fitting relation:

So, till the fates find a fitter one, let us, not making long faces,
But thankful enough to Linnæus, put up with his classification.

New light anon! Hope of haven descried from a different shore, now!
Where Science, in France, clearer-sighted, escaped from all tangle and trammel, eyes
The whole of the vegetal world in neat groups, and has fix'd evermore now
This fact,—that, tho' plants have no sexes, they nevertheless may have families.

Still, tho', the infinite found in the finite dismays our endeavour.
To the unknown perforce we abandon this vast starry sphere (sad confession!)
As baffling our bounded embrace: but it surely is hard when for ever
The least grain of sand we approach, growing reachless, eludes our possession.

Worlds beyond worlds without end, we may make up our minds to relinquish:
But worlds within worlds without end make the heart of a man faint within him;

To be mock'd by a mite! and to feel that the lamp of our life must extinguish
Its light, ere, exploring, we measure immensity pack'd in a minim!

To be crusht by a crystal of salt! to be foil'd by a film, or a flinder!
To be stopp'd like the merest, minutest of emmets, whose poor little progress
To the goal, where she drops underground, the least hump of a molehill may hinder!
A fortress to find in each fungus! in each lady Fly-trap an ogress!

"*One* group, but one, from the million learn first to know something about, now,"
Says the Lecturer, leaving the pulpit, his brain for a while pump'd powerless,
"I propose to begin with the most elementary class, and give out now
As the theme of our next day's discourse, the class call'd Cryptogamic, or Flowerless."

Deep, then, we plunge into Acrogens, Ætheogams, Amphigams, still:
Hope to get on by degrees into Exogens, Endogens: meantime

Moons wax and wane; summers fleet; from the Student, as patient he crams still
Dry leaves under tin lids, steals sighing the glad and the green time.

Sad! For I fancy . . . at times, as the moist eye wanes ever meeker,
And the lank yellow locks by degrees fall scant from the pure bald brow,
Much-tried Theophilus (still a sad-thoughted unsatisfied seeker)
Startled, perchance, by the cuckoo, or vext by green buds on the bough,

Lifting those wide wan looks, with an unslaked grief in the gaze of them,
Into the high blue stillness of heaven, so still, and so high!
Watching the white clouds roll'd on the unreturning ways of them,
Murmuring among his books, with a deep dejected sigh,

"Ah, but all this, after all, is not what I pined for! Up there
The veilèd Mystery sits on the solemn mountain peak:
The vast clouds form and change at her feet: and my heart's despair
Cries aloud where no answer is heard: for this Silence never will speak.

"Yonder, up there, as of old, when he play'd on my heart's harp-strings,
The wind, with a surly music, is moaning aloof in the tree:
Yonder, up there, in the blue and the breezy mid-sky swings
The lanneret hawk, as of old, when my heart went higher than he.

"Could one leap all at once to the end! not doom'd, like a grub, to grope
About in the blinding earth, looking up never more from one's load!
Well, never mind! One is laying up knowledge, at least, one must hope;
And one cannot afford to leap over the knowledge that lies in one's road."

Intermediate methods! importance of every detail!
Say we, consoling ourselves; and again pick up heart to persist.
Ha, but cryptogams grow by the hundred, and books by the bushel,—*men* fail!
Here the door opens. In steps the Botanical Archivist,

Asking . . . whom else but Theophilus? what better man could you wish?
To catalogue all the collection of dried plants recently sent
From the Himmalayan range by Commander Cornelius Fish;
And Theophilus cannot decline an appeal where an honour is meant.

Friend! when a man to one purpose the whole of his will hath awarded,
He will justly be jealous of all other claims on the time given to it:
He will lock up his life in a turret of tall triple brass, dragon-guarded,
Hide himself close in a strong central thought, and let nothing break thro' it:

Beauty peeps in at the casement, he savagely fastens the shutter:
Pleasure trips light at the threshold, he pushes the bolt in the door:
Fortune, red gold in her right hand, comes fearless with good news to utter,
He seals up his ears like Ulysses, and laughs at her, proud to be poor:

But one foe, the most unforeseen, the most dangerous, deadliest of all,
Sure, if it finds, to o'erthrow him—the child of a word or a glance,
The tenant of emptiest nothing—he cannot exclude, nor forestal,
Nor contend with, how wary so ever: and that foe is Innocent Chance.

Theophilus, most conscientious, most scrupulous scraper-together
Of crumbs dropt from other men's trenchers, laboriously much-annotating,
Sorting, reviewing, arranging,—assigning its true whence and whither
To this plant, and that plant, of each plant the family history stating,

In the hap-hazard, higgledy-piggledy ship-load of riches from Nature
Robb'd by Commander Cornelius Fish, the illustrious sailor,
Lights, by ill luck, on a milk-white gnaphalium, foreign in feature,—
Petals more pointed and definite, sepals profuser and paler

Than those of its kindred in Europe,—in short, a new specimen, clearly
Distinguish'd. Whereat, as in conscience compell'd, for mankind's information
The Doctor (alas! now no longer mere student, but straighten'd severely
Into sedate middle age) then and there, after due consultation

Of all that botanical writers have said on gnaphalia in general,
Sits down, and indites a small treatise, this specimen specially treating;—
Its structure, morphology, system, and elements, gaseous or mineral,
Thus in respect of the race of gnaphalia, our knowledge completing.

Which done now, . . . no sooner the Doctor's small treatise, exciting sensation,
Is read by the learnèd, than straightway three scandalised *savants*, dissenting
In toto, determined to deal with what calls for severe reprobation,
Hurl at him and the public three passionate pamphlets, objecting, commenting,

Suggesting, appealing, opposing, inveighing, reproaching, regretting;
Whereunto, nothing daunted, he feels himself bound to make answer minutely,
Disclosing, expounding, disputing, affirming, denying, upsetting,
Proving himself no mere tyro, attacking the main points acutely.

Back to the charge, each opponent, tenacious returning, with rage hacks
Hard at the Doctor, and fights every inch with the heart of a Roman:
Not to be vanquish'd by numbers, the Doctor, as valiant as Ajax,
Buckles the tighter his breastplate, and rushes in wrath on the foeman.

Religion, meanwhile, and Theology fly to the rescue of something,
No man precisely knows what, with emphatical protest on all things.
O what a strepitant contest, to make a man envy the dumb thing
Gifted by God with the grace to be silent, whatever men call things!

Ossas of argument piled upon Pelions of perfect conviction!
Otium rogat . . . no help for it! Caught now, mid-seas, *in Ægeo*,
On we drive, hurl'd by Euroclydon . . . Heaven send us help in affliction,
And save us from heretic knaves, *qui non recte loquuntur de Deo!*

Deathless, the dismal discussion continues thro' years grey and greyer.
Curst be the hand of Commander Cornelius Fish! that did gather
That mischievous milk-white mountain weed, better left on its layer
Of snow, near the sunrise, safe hid in the high Himmalayan weather.

Wretchedest weed in creation! sly hypocrite fashion'd by Fate,
To bring the grey hairs of my friend full of grief to the grave where he lies now!
Who could surmise in thy face of white innocence heartfuls of hate
And contention? No more upon thee, wicked weed, will I ever set eyes now!

For the learnèd defunct we lament here at last grew (and all for thy sake too!)
Nothing more than, himself, a mere human gnaphalium, sapless and wither'd;
Till Death, for his own choice collection of dried things, was minded to take to
Himself such a notable specimen. Bloom, with the bloom off him, gather'd

By Dis, gloomy gatherer! catalogued, pack'd up, disposed of for ever,
Lies (here you have him!) named, dated, and done with. Meanwhile the great question
He started, surviving the Doctor, who died of his latest endeavour,
Continues to puzzle our Pundits with cart-loads of precious suggestion.

Suppose, now, some man with one object in life—to construct a steam-engine:—
First, say you, study dynamics; then metals; learn smelting and founding;
Off with you, next, to the cog-wheel department; cog wheels; you may then join
The cylinder-makers; and so forth; in this way the full circle rounding;

Meanwhile the man dies. Our friend here,—what now is he doing, I wonder?
Chasing a phantom gnaphalium, worlds beyond worlds wanly straying?
Or simply, with palms cross'd at ease on his cool narrow couch, lying under
This pother, and laughing alone in his grave-sleeve at what I am saying?

Anyhow, here lie the mortal remains (with a limitless list too
Of academies, institutes, colleges, orders, whereof he was member)
Of Doctor Theophilus Timothy Bloom the renown'd botanist, who
Died in the year Sixty-two, on the fourteenth day of December.

Well! sitting here on, the grave of my master, while under the stone
The red worm is picking his brains, there's a notion comes into my mind:—
(Was it the throstle that sung it, up there where the black-thorn is blown?
Or here, in the long grass, was it let fall by the whispering wind?

What, if the grey cricket chirrup'd it, chasing yon seed-ball enchanted?
What, if the wild bee humm'd it, ruffling the rich guelder rose?)
The world, perchance after all, knows already enough: what is wanted
Is, not to know more, but know how to *imagine* the much that it knows.

A GREAT MAN.

1.

THAT man is great, and he alone,
Who serves a greatness not his own,
For neither praise nor pelf:
Content to know, and be unknown:
Whole in himself.

2.

Strong is that man, he only strong,
To whose well-order'd will belong,
For service and delight,
All powers that, in the face of Wrong,
Establish Right.

3.

And free he is, and only he,
Who, from his tyrant passions free,
By Fortune undismay'd,
Hath power upon himself, to be
By himself obey'd.

4.

If such a man there be, where'er
Beneath the sun and moon he fare,
He cannot fare amiss.
Great Nature hath him in her care
Her cause is his :

5.

Who holds by everlasting law
Which neither chance nor change can flaw :
Whose steadfast course is one
With whatsoever forces draw
The ages on :

6.

Who hath not bow'd his honest head
To base Occasion : nor, in dread
Of Duty, shunn'd her eye :
Nor truckled to loud times : nor wed
His heart to a lie :

7.

Nor fear'd to follow, in the offence
Of false opinion, his own sense
Of justice unsubdued :
Nor shrunk from any consequence
Of doing good.

8.

He looks his Angel in the face
Without a blush : nor heeds disgrace,
Whom nought disgraceful done
Disgraces. Who knows nothing base
Fears nothing known.

9.

Not morsell'd out from day to day
In feverish wishes, nor the prey
Of hours that have no plan,
His life is whole, to give away
To God and man.

10.

For tho' he live aloof from ken,
The world's unwitness'd denizen,
The love within him stirs
Abroad, and with the hearts of men
His own confers :

11.

The judge upon the justice-seat :
The brown-back'd beggar in the street :
The spinner in the sun :
The reapers reaping in the wheat :
The wan-cheek'd nun

12.

In cloister cold : the prisoner lean
In lightless den : the robèd Queen :
Even the youth who waits,
Hiding the knife, to glide unseen
Between the gates :—

13.

He nothing human alien deems
Unto himself, nor disesteems
Man's meanest claim upon him :
And, where he walks, the mere sunbeams
Drop blessings on him :

14.

Because they know him Nature's friend,
On whom she doth delight to tend
With loving-kindness ever,
Helping and heartening to the end
His high endeavour.

15.

Therefore, tho' mortal made, he can
Work miracles. The uncommon man
Leaves nothing commonplace.
He *is* the marvellous. To span
The abyss of space,

16.

The orb of time, is his by faith,
And his, whilst breathing human breath,
To taste, before he dies,
The deep eventual calm of death,
Life's latest prize.

17.

If such a man there be, where'er
Beneath the sun and moon he fare,
He doth not fare alone.
He goeth girt with cohorts, powers,
The monarch of his manful hours,
Whose mind's his throne:

18.

He owes no homage to the sun:
There's nothing he need seek or shun;
All things are his by right:
He is his own posterity:
His future in himself doth lie:
His soul's his light:

19.

Lord of a lofty life is he,
Loftily living, tho' he be
Of lowly birth: tho' poor,
He lacks not wealth: nor high degree
In state obscure.

20.

The merely great are, all in all,
No more than what the merely small
Esteem them. Man's opinion
Neither conferr'd, nor can recall,
This man's dominion.

MABEL MAY.

1.

I WAS weary all thro' of the thousand and one
Wants, wishes, and wretchedest sorts of strife
Within, and without, which some call Life,
Mabel May,
When I climb'd to the cloud on the mountain cone,
And lay on the bare black rock, alone,
In the watchful twilight vast and grey,
Mabel May;
And yearn'd for the yet unarisen light,
As a wretch yearns, sick of a woeful night;
—To plunge, in a passionate gush of sight,
And leap at one bound of a rapture bright,
Into the burning heart of the sun,
And be lost,—like a star, when the dark is done,
O'erwhelm'd in the fount of the full-pour'd day,
Mabel May!

2.

And lo you! all round me, all o'er me, he rose,
The august godlike Glory pure,
Which not even the eagle's eyes endure,
Mabel May:
He smote, like a trumpet, the slumbering snows
To a burning blush, from their pale repose
Wide awake; and . . . How shall I say,
Mabel May?
My very heart ached with the interminate
Splendour for which it had lain in wait.
Was it joy, was it pain, was it love, was it hate,
That agony born of a bliss too great?
And I stagger'd blinded beneath the blows
Of the bare-orb'd Beauty, and sought for who knows
What phantom hand to lead me away,
Mabel May!

3.

So it ever hath been, so it ever shall be,
Since man was made for the lot of man.
'Tis the curse of his course since his course began,
Mabel May.
Our soul to feel, and our sight to see,
Are afire and athirst. Then it comes: and we
Are made sport for the powers we brought into play,
Mabel May.

We desire: we are strong: we are proud of the pain:
Scale the summit: and, breathless, behold—but in vain—
What we cannot endure. We are lost by our gain,
And o'erwhelm'd by the triumph whereto we attain:
Enslaved by the force we ourselves have set free,
And unmade by the might that we make. Who is he
That stands fast, and looks full in the face of his day,
Mabel May?

4.

So I turn'd me anon by the downward track
To the valley beneath; never lifting again
My looks left dim by the dazzling pain,
Mabel May;
With above and behind me the mountain, black
And broad, still holding the sun at his back;
And dejectedly follow'd my darkling way,
Mabel May,
With no care now what the chance might be
Of the next thing I should be forced to see,
When the dance of the colours that, dazzling me,
Danced on before, should disperse and flee,
And leave me asmart from the torturous hack
Of the Sun-god's triumphing knife, alack!
Like that poor Satyr, he stoop'd to flay,
Mabel May.

5.

But how did it happen? For suddenly there
The vale was wash'd with a warm sweet wave
Of luminous verdure balmy and suave,
Mabel May;
And a million mild wild odours were
Afloat in the fresh moist morning air;
And the birds broke out in a rapturous lay,
Mabel May;
While on each grass blade, in a silver bell,
The bright dew trembled before it fell
To the warbling pure, in the sweetbriar dell,
Of that delicate harper, Ariel;
And even the rock, no longer bare,
Was robed in a roseate mantle rare;
And the gaunt thorn-bushes were laughing gay,
Mabel May.

6.

Fools fly in the face of the bliss they believe
They were born for. If born for it, why not wait?
Can fate miss man, or man miss fate,
Mabel May?
No! we claim to acquire, unresign'd to receive,
What chance, not choice, can alone achieve:
And then, when we fail, as is fit, we say
(Mabel May)

'Better check desire than clasp despair!'
But what, when we say it, if unaware
The burning Beauty we could not bear,
Taking pity on our pain'd pride, as 'twere,
Should pour itself over our path, and weave
Life's way with the light we have learn'd to leave,
Warming our souls with a reflex ray,
Mabel May?

7.

O 'tis you are the cause of these thoughts, I try
To release in song, but shall never succeed;
They lie too deep in my soul, indeed,
Mabel May!
For in you is the light of my life; and I
And my life are yours, to be made thereby
Of what colour you will. You are my day,
Mabel May!
But that light of you in this life of mine
Were a depth of glory too divine
For my sense to bear, if it did not shine
Soften'd, reflected,—fused, in fine,
With the common things of life, that lie
In that light, transmuted to melody,
Odour, and colour, by its glad play,
Mabel May.
My wife, my life, my day, whose sway
Makes all things sweet with a sense of sun,

—Scent-breathing flowers, and birds' glad tone!
My one in all, and my all in one,
Now I hold you fast where my footsteps stray,
And find you most when you seem away,
Loving you more than my love can say,
Mabel May!

END OF BOOK IX.

EPILOGUE.

SPEED thee well, noble soul, gallant heart,
Who unscared goest forth to the strife!
Speed thee well, wheresoever thou art,
In the ranks of the armies of life,
Who dost battle for Good to the death,
In that battle which never shall cease:
And whose truth, long as falsehood hath breath,
Will not parley with falsehood for peace!
Who aloud, tho' unheard, criest No,
When earth's clamorous Yes doth assent
To the evil that's easy to do
In a world that's with evil content.
Yet restrain the exuberant sense
Of the strength that is theirs who are strong
In the Right: which, however immense,
Is not yet more immense than the Wrong.
For the battle, O soldier, is not
To the strong, nor the race to the swift.
For much given, tho' little be got,
Yet, O giver, be glad of thy gift.

Though it be but a weed or a shell,
That the labour of ages hath given
Unto desert or ocean, to tell
Of how deluge and earthquake have striven,
Nature doth not despond: nor do thou
From man's feverish effort hope more
Than the labouring ages allow
Nature's infinite patience to store.
Look behind thee, and scan what is lost:
And around thee, behold what doth rest.
Lo, how little earth saves at the most
Of the life of her bravest and best!
Of what mighty endeavours begun
What results insufficient remain,
And of how many victories won
Half the spoils have been taken again!
For in scum this hot passion of life,
Seething over, is spent: and so loses
The possession of that which the strife
Of its turbulent impulse diffuses:
Until, self-defeated, it sinks
Back again to a lowlier level,
As, from bubbles that burst at the brinks,
Fall the leas of each lingering evil.
By evangel and angel from Heaven
Unto Earth's many mourners below,
Long of yore, the "Glad tidings" were given:
But Earth's gladness, O where is it now?

Long of yore, on the mountain, the voice
Of the merciful Master was heard
To the mourners proclaiming 'Rejoice:'
And, rejoicing, they welcom'd his word:
To the hand of the rich man 'Restore,'
To the heart of the poor man 'Be fed,'
And 'Be heal'd,' to the souls that were sore,
And to all men 'Be brothers,' it said.
But, since Christ hath been nail'd to the tree,
Fruits unripe have our hands gather'd of it:
Noisy worship of lip and of knee,
Niggard love, not of love, but of profit.
For the poor is opprest as of old:
And of all men is no man the brother:
And the Churches but gather their gold,
While the nations destroy one another:
Only, all of these things are now done
In another than Cæsar's name:
And all wrongs that are Christless go on
Unashamed of all Christian shame:
By the white man despised is the black:
And the strong hath his heel on the weak:
By the burthen still gall'd is the back:
And the goal is yet distant to seek:
Tho', to guide us, its shining is oft,
Like a fire on the midnight, discern'd:
When the hope of man's heart leaps aloft
From the chain that his anguish hath spurn'd:

As in Germany once: when a priest
Was chang'd into a man, for man's sake;
And his word, as the dawn fills the East,
Fill'd the West, till a world was awake;
In the letter a soul was created
By the breaking the seals of a book;
And man's conscience in man reinstated,
All conscienceless sovereignties shook:
Shook indeed, but not shatter'd! For straightway
When indignant and bold in the breach
Thought arose, and sped on thro' the gateway,
Whence she beckon'd to all and to each,
They that loosed her lost heart: and, as onward
She explored her companionless track
To the goal of her destiny—sunward,
They wrung hands, and shriek'd to her 'Come back!'
So she pass'd from among them forever,
And hath left them where, still in the dark,
Blowing watchfires spent, they shall never
Blow the ashes thereof to a spark:
Once in England: when Hampden's high will,
Eliot's truth that was true to the death,
Pym's large speech, and the sword that hath still
'FREEDOM,' graven by Law, on its sheath,
Won for England what woe to the day
When England forgets to revere,
Or unheedfully casts it away,
Thro' Futurity helmless to steer!

Once in France : when the storm of the sound
Of the spirits of men rushing free
Shook the shores of the nations around,
As the roar of a jubilant sea ;
And the heart of the feeble wax'd strong,
For his friends were as one flesh and blood
In the casting away of time's wrong
And the gathering up of earth's good ;
But dull time goeth deafly since when
Those rejoicings were mingled by time
With the moans of the murders of men,
And the cursings of carnage and crime ;
All is silent and sullen again :
And again the old cankering forms
Reappear, as when after the rain
From the earth reappear the earth-worms.
O the infinite effort that seems
But in infinite failure to finish !
Man's belief in the good that he dreams
Must each fact, he awakes to, diminish ?
God forbid ! Whom thank thou for whatever
Of evil remains—understood
As *good* cause for continued endeavour
In the battle 'twixt Evil and Good.
Heed not what may be gain'd or be lost
In that battle. Whatever the odds,
Fight it out, never counting the cost ;
Man's the deed is, the consequence God's.

No man's labour for good is in vain,
Tho' he win, not the crown but the cross.
Every wish for man's good is a gain:
Every doubt of man's gain is a loss.
Not the price that we bargain to pay,
But the price that she sets on herself,
Is the value of Truth. Who can weigh
What the weight of her worth is in pelf?
To the soul, by whose lifelong endeavour
Age hath won from the losses of youth,
The mere loss of an untruth is ever
Good as great as the gain of a truth.
Men were fashion'd to love and to know:
And in Knowledge and Love are the goals
Of man's course, tho' its speed may be slow:
In our patience possess we our souls.
To love and to know . . . winning love,
Winning knowledge, by labour'd degrees
From the doubts life compels us to prove,
And the wants we are forced to appease.
For man's privilege is to wring out
From the knowledge of evil the zest
That intensifies good: and from doubt
The convictions time puts to the test.
Old Experience—the bourne and the grave
Of the Sluggard's self-sepulchred mind—
Is the stronghold whence issues the Brave
To acquire new realms for mankind.

For had man's ever-widening will
No domain but Experience, his sons
Like his sires, would be savages still,
Chewing acorns and worshipping stones.
Deep in Nature's undrain'd Cornucopia
Every good that man seeks he shall find:
And to fools, only fools, is Utopia
The abode of the hopes of mankind.
For whate'er God hath made for man's good,
He hath granted man means to attain:
Say thou therefore 'I will,' not 'I would,'
Undeterr'd by the coward's disdain.
All unblest would our fate be, indeed,
If yet all that can bless it were ended,
And we had but to write and to read
Of the deeds which the great buried men did
Did they plant? what they planted we grow.
Every grain shall be ground into bread.
Every virtue that's in us we owe
To the unborn no less than the dead:
For, ere born yet, Posterity breathes
In our being: and shapes by its breath
The incentives (worth more than the wreathes)
Of the men that win wreathes after death.
God be thank'd that the dead have left still
Good undone, for the living to do—
Still some aim for the heart and the will
And the soul of a man to pursue!

God be thank'd for the ills that endure,
With the glory that's yet to be won
From the hurts we may hope yet to cure
By the deeds yet reserved to be done!
And thank God for the foes that remain,
If they hearten us, Friend, for the fight;
And the mercy that grants to man's gain
Yet a new gain forever in sight!
Forth! Rejoice in the Good that God gives
By the hand of beneficent Ill,
And be glad that He leaves to our lives
Means to make them heroical still.

THE END.

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